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The LITTLE AMBASSADORS



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The Little Ambassadors

By

HENRIETTE EUGÉNIE DELAMARE
*Author of "Her Heart's Desire," "The Adventures
of Four Young Americans," "Nellie Kelly,"
"Ronald's Mission," etc., etc.*

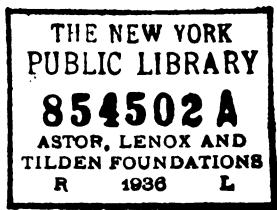


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To

*our Blessed Mother, whose help never
fails those who truly trust in her, this
book is dedicated with deep love and
veneration*



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The Little Ambassadors

CHAPTER I

FATHER AND SON

“WELL, anyhow I suppose it will be grand to be ambassadors,” said Gilbert, as if trying to find some redeeming feature to their plans for the future. “It looks swell to wear an embroidered coat and a cocked hat and to have a whole row of whacking big medals across one’s chest, and ——”

“Will we all have to wear cocked hats?” asked Baby Theodora in some alarm.

Her mother, Lady Artingdale, laughed merrily. “Why, no, dearest,” she answered, “even papa will only wear his occasionally and he is not going to be an ambassador yet a while, only first secretary of legation.”

“Oh, it’s just the same, isn’t it?” asked Gilbert.

“No, not at all, in many ways. To begin with, it is being second fiddle instead of first; then your father will have to work much harder and receive far less salary than the ambassador. Still, I hope

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we might have a very happy time in Rome, though my ambitious little son will not be an ambassador himself or anything approaching one."

"Oh, well! we'll belong to the embassy anyhow, won't we, and that sounds grand, but why can't father go by himself as he did before?" inquired Gilbert in an aggrieved tone.

"Well, it has so happened that your father was appointed first in Brazil where there is much danger from yellow fever, and then in China at a time when the country was in such a state of revolution that he did not think it safe to take us there. If it had not been for those circumstances we should always have accompanied him. It has been a great trial to him to be nearly all the time away from us but now we'll be able to be together once more, at least for part of the year. We ought to be very thankful to be reunited."

"Ye-e-es," answered Gilbert doubtfully, for Lord Artingdale, though a very loving father, was a thoroughly uncompromising Englishman with strong English ideas as to the upbringing of his children and specially of his boys, with whom he was distant and stern in manner. Therefore, in spite of the delightful prospect of being what Gilbert persisted in calling "ambassadors" and spending many months in the Eternal City, the child heartily wished his father were going back to some place where they could not follow him.

"You say father will be very busy in Rome,"

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he said suddenly, after a few minutes of brown study.

"Yes, very busy, I expect. I don't think we shall see much of him except at meals and of an evening."

"Oh, I'm glad!" cried the child impulsively, and his mother, though she reproved him gravely for saying such an unkind thing about "poor papa," felt that in her heart of hearts she was deeply tempted to echo the little boy's sentiment.

After having been thus forcibly separated from his family by a peculiar chain of circumstances, Lord Artingdale had been not a little dismayed on his return home to find his boys very American in their manners and thoughts, though he had to admit they were fine manly little fellows. In point of fact, they were a very cosmopolitan family and it was strange that Viscount Artingdale himself should be so thoroughly and unmistakably English. His mother was a Frenchwoman, had never thoroughly become Anglicized and, with her husband's consent, had taken the habit of spending quite half the year in her family Château of La Roche Altée or oftener in a beautiful château in Touraine which, together with a considerable fortune, had been unexpectedly left her by a rather distant cousin some years after her marriage. During her absence the Marquis spent the greater part of the time in some of his country estates riding, hunting and thoroughly enjoying himself, and he was perfectly satis-

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fied to have his wife at home but for a few months during the London season.

"Ah, if only my cousin had announced his intention of making me his heiress while I was still a girl how different my life might have been!" she often exclaimed, casting up her hands in her impulsive French manner. And she might have added, "How different would have been the lives of my sons and in consequence of many others."

The only daughter, indeed the only child of the Marquis and Marquise de Monsac de la Roche Altée, both of whom were the crème de la crème of French aristocracy, she had had for her dowry little but her beauty and the glory of her great name, for the de Monsacs were "poor as Job" in spite of their long lineage. Her girlhood had been saddened and embittered by the pinchings and sacrifices that had to be gone through in order to keep up some sort of semblance of their great rank, and therefore when the wealthy young Earl of Sheendon had fallen in love with her and asked for her hand, Aline de Monsac had been more than willing to accept him unconditionally, though he was a rather bigoted Protestant and her own family had always been noted for its piety and devotion to the Church. Her parents had tried to obtain from their future son-in-law a promise to have Aline's children brought up in the Catholic faith, but he had absolutely refused to comply with this request and had given them to understand that he

would sooner break off the match than give way on that point. Aline was so terrified at the thought of losing her wealthy lover and the life of pleasure and luxury which would be hers as Countess of Sheendon, that she insisted that her parents should desist from any further discussion with the young Earl and gladly accepted his compromise, allowing her to practice her own religion, but as privately as possible, so as not to shock his relatives and friends.

At the time of her marriage all this had seemed simple and easy enough to the young bride, but as the years rolled on and her children were born and grew up, she felt all the misery of her position and was bitterly punished for having, as it were, sold her children's souls for a handful of gold. Ah! if before her marriage she had but known how soon she was to become an heiress she would have put her foot down and refused to accept the Earl under such conditions, she constantly told herself. When the fortune came, it was too late and she was spending a restless, joyless life, feeling as if there was an impassable barrier between herself and her children, whom their Protestant relatives had insisted on training in the most anti-Catholic views. She was also ill at ease in a country where the manners and ideas were so different to those in which she had been brought up. She had little by little become rather neglectful of her religious duties, vainly trying to drown the aching of her

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heart and the reproaches of her conscience, by devoting her time and strength to a feverish life among an exclusive society set with which she was out of sympathy, and to pleasures which only palled upon her.

Her second son, Christopher, was a selfish, indolent, narrow-minded man, decidedly delicate and of a nervous, excitable temper like her own, but her favorite had always been her eldest son, Arthur, Viscount Artingdale, a fine, manly, reliable fellow, very true hearted, though rather stiff and formal in his manners. To her intense surprise he had not only married an American girl but one who was a Catholic and who only accepted him on condition he would respect her faith and allow her to bring all her children up as Catholics. In spite of her, this girl's spirit made the Countess feel ashamed of herself, and she could with difficulty forgive her for being, as it were, a continual tacit reproof and reminder of her own want of courage and faithlessness to her religion. Yet, notwithstanding this, she could not but love her charming daughter-in-law and was intensely happy to feel that her grandchildren would be Catholics and good ones, too.

The Earl had been very angry about it at first, but he was proud of his son's fiancée, he hated to take trouble over anything, and he had found it so simple to have his own sons brought up in direct opposition to their mother's beliefs, that he per-

suaded himself it would be an equally easy matter to make the eldest son change over to his way of thinking when he was old enough to understand how much better this would be for his social position. So, though he protested, the old Earl made no direct opposition to his son's marriage for he knew how intensely stubborn the young man was and rightly felt that any strong antagonism on his part would only bring about a complete rupture between them, a thing he was anxious to avoid.

After all, he thought, his son and heir was a steady Protestant and not likely to change his mind about that any more than about anything else, and long before his grandson became heir apparent, Lord Artingdale would most likely have persuaded him to give up his papist ideas. The boys would of course be sent to Eton or Rugby, then to Oxford or Cambridge and all nonsense would there be driven out of their minds. In vain Christopher, who was very bigoted and had no great love for his brother, tried to stir up the old man's anger; he merely got snubbed for his pains and determined to wait for a better opportunity of working for his own advantages by getting his brother into disgrace.

Lord and Lady Artingdale's children were therefore, as you see, what Philip called Franco-American-English and during their father's enforced absences they had spent much of their time either in America with their beloved "granddad" and "grandma" or in the delightful old Château in

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Touraine with "bonne maman" (good mama) as they had been taught to call their father's mother. Gilbert always declared the titles of their grandmothers should be reversed, for the good, loving, spoiling one was Mrs. Van Orton, their American granny, whereas the Countess, though she loved the children deeply, was very stern and exacting in her manner and sharp in her reproofs. Still she gave lovely presents, her château and parks were delightful and their French cousins and friends great fun, so that altogether they were always glad to visit "bonne maman" in spite of her grand airs and the precise etiquette she strictly enforced.

"Bonne maman" always expected the boys to bow to her respectfully, to kiss her hand, and to wait upon her almost like the pages of olden times. Even her wee granddaughter, little Theo, had been taught to make a curtsey whenever she met her, though, to be sure, her grandmother did generally catch her up in her arms and hug her afterwards. No one could have resisted the charm of that sweet little face, or the dainty grace of that childish curtsey, with the little embroidered frock held out so carefully by the dimpled baby hands.

Theodora! the gift of God! Ah, yes, so she had proved to be to her mother, a priceless gift bringing joy and solace to her often aching heart. For true as Lady Artingdale had been to her faith and the dictates of her conscience, she nevertheless found life, as her mother-in-law had before her, any-

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thing but easy when in her husband's country and among his friends. She felt she was looked upon by them as an alien and the rest of his family could not forgive her for being a Catholic herself and bringing up her children in that faith. Then, too, there seemed to be a yawning gulf between her and her husband, much as she loved and admired him. Both she and her children were ceaseless in their prayers for his conversion though to all human appearance it seemed an almost impossible thing for which to hope.

Now, since Lord Artingdale's return home, new complications had arisen. He was, as I before mentioned, very much annoyed to find his boys had been brought up according to American ideas, that they had been encouraged to be self-reliant and to express their thoughts and ideas on all subjects. He found them lacking in deference to himself, for though *he* did not expect them to kiss his hand as did his mother, he did wish them to treat him as a far superior being, not as a loved companion and friend as they treated their mother. Then, too, the children had been used to having Lady Artingdale's constant care and companionship. They resented the way in which their father now monopolized her and sorrowfully regretted that he was not going away once more. Sweet Lady Artingdale felt all this and was sadly anxious, dreading more and more complications as time went on.

It had been arranged that Philip and Emil should

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be left in England, and their father, after endless difficulty, had consented that they should stay at Stonyhurst, at least for a few years longer, instead of going to Eton, where he had first wished to send them. Gilbert, commonly called Bertie, and little Theo were to accompany their parents, under the care of their much loved governess; who was also their mother's companion and the tactful confidant of many of her sorrows and anxieties.

It unfortunately happened that Gilbert was, as his father expressed it, the most "Yankee" of all his children, that is to say, the most independent, outspoken and fearless of him, and both his mother and Mlle. Lamotte dreaded the coming conflict between the child's strong will and that of his rather stern father. It is true Gilbert was rather a handful for every one. There was so much in him, he was so brimful of ideas, of plans, of superabundant energy. He was the one who always scandalized his French and English relatives by his unconventional remarks on people and things, who smashed his mother's best china, upset the pleasure boat, trod on "bonne maman's" train, spoke most of that "abominable" American slang and got into "hot water" generally. But then he was so thoroughly warm-hearted, so earnest a little worker, and so true and uncompromising in his loyalty to his faith! His sense of honor was intense, he was truthful almost to a fault and his devoted, chivalrous love of his mother and little sister was quite touching.

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The house was already in all the turmoil of preparation for their departure. Lady Artingdale and Mlle. Lamotte were almost worked to death superintending the very complicated packing. Not only had they to prepare the outfit of the two elder boys for college, but only part of their own piles of luggage was to be sent with much furniture and other goods direct to Rome, as Lady Artingdale and her children were to spend a month with the dowager Countess at the Château d'Hautebréche, while Lord Artingdale got everything ready for the reception of his family in their new home.

Nothing is much more tiring or harassing than the breaking up of a home and the ladies were therefore feeling worn out and nervous, Lord Artingdale was looking sterner than usual and the luncheon had been a silent one when Gilbert suddenly inquired of his father:

“Are you coming to Hautebréche with us, sir?”

“No,” answered Lord Artingdale. “I visited my mother a month ago and have to hasten to take possession of my post now. I have important duties to perform.”

“You bet!” exclaimed Gilbert in a tone of such relief that his mother and governess trembled to think what would come next.

“Instead of using such vulgar slang it would be far more polite of you to express some regret at my being unable to accompany you,” said his father, sharply.

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"Don't you like going to Rome and having important duties to perform?" asked Gilbert evasively.

"Yes, of course I like it, in a way—but that is not what I'm speaking of. I said decent politeness required you to express some regret at my having to leave you so soon."

Gilbert reddened, hesitated, then murmured apologetically:

"I'm sorry you're disappointed about going to see bonne maman, sir."

"That's begging the question, Gilbert, and you know it," cried his father angrily. "Your answer is very diplomatic but I want no diplomacy from my children. I *order* you to tell me in plain English that you are sorry I am not going to accompany you all to Hautebrèche. Now do you understand?"

Gilbert looked straight up into his father's face, and the look, though not defiant, was resolute in the extreme.

"Bertie, darling, answer papa. He doesn't understand you, Arthur," cried Lady Artingdale in a pleading, anxious tone.

The child's lips quivered but he did not speak.

"Gilbert! Are you going to obey me?" asked his father.

"No, sir," answered the child in a low voice. "I can't."

"You can't! and why not, pray?"

"Because—because I never told an untruth and

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I'm not going to," blurted poor Bertie, the tears starting to his eyes.

"Well, that's a sweet filial assertion, certainly," cried Lord Artingdale angrily. "You *dare* to tell me that you are glad I'm not coming with you, you insolent little fellow!"

"I didn't say I was *glad*."

"But you won't say you are sorry, not even for your mother's sake," added Lord Artingdale with a look at his wife, whose face was deadly pale while two great tears slowly trickled down her cheeks.

"Mother wouldn't wish me to tell an untruth. She told me one day she would rather see me a thief than a liar."

"These polite remarks, even if untrue, are only white lies. They don't count. Everybody says them and besides, even if you have no natural affection for me as your father, I mean you to obey me. Do you know what flogging means? Were you ever flogged?"

"No, sir, but I know what it means. It's whipping with cords. Sailors and wicked people are sometimes flogged and—and our Lord was flogged at the pillar," answered the child with a quiver in his voice.

The last sentence made Lord Artingdale wince, but he continued sternly:

"And what would you say if I were to promise to flog you if you didn't obey me?"

Gilbert crimsoned, his hands clenched nervously

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and there was such a lump in his throat and such frantic thumping at his heart that he could barely articulate the words :

“ Nothing—I’d have nothing to say — ”

“ You mean to tell me that you defy me ! that you’d rather be flogged than say you’re sorry not to have me with you, Gilbert ? This is unbearable ! ” cried his father, springing to his feet angrily. “ Now mind you, no more nonsense. Do as I tell you or leave the table and go up to my room and wait for me.”

“ I—I can’t tell an untruth. I’d rather be flogged,” cried the child with a sob as he rose from the table and went towards the door.

“ My Bertie ! I won’t have you punish my Bertie ! ” cried little Theo, wriggling down from her high chair and running after her brother, who stopped to throw his arms around her and kiss her, murmuring : “ Never mind, kiddie, Bertie don’t care ”—and Mlle. Lamotte hastened forward, and catching little Theo in her arms brought her back to the table sobbing and struggling.

Lady Artingdale, almost faint from emotion, looked in anguish from her husband to her little son, but felt that interference from her would only make matters worse. As Gilbert closed the door after him his father uttered an exclamation of astonishment, feeling utterly stupefied at finding such power of will and force of character in so young a child. Lord Artingdale could not under-

stand it, couldn't realize that a child of seven had actually dared to resist him. He sat down again and pretended to eat while all around him there was an awed silence but for the heart-broken sobs of Theodora. No one felt they could swallow a mouthful and the elder boys looked with indignant sorrow from the white tearful face of their mother to the hard set countenance of their father who seemed deep in thought.

"Philip!" he said at last quite suddenly, "go and tell your brother to come down again."

A few minutes later Gilbert stood with bent head just inside the dining-room door. His face was pale, his eyes red and swollen with crying, but there was a resolute look about his mouth and about the whole small childish figure.

"Gilbert," said his father in a low voice, "come here and shake hands, my boy."

The child looked up in astonishment, then came forward half timidly and put his little cold trembling hand into the strong, white one of his father who pressed it tenderly as with his other arm he drew the child to him.

"You were not polite to me just now, Gilbert, and you did not express very kind or filial sentiments towards me. Still I'm proud of you, my boy. I am proud to have a son whose sense of duty and love of truth are so great that he would prefer having a flogging to telling what in society is termed a white lie. You are quite right, there

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are no white lies and nothing in this world can justify a man of honor for acting or speaking against his conscience. Mere baby as you are, I honor you for your moral courage, and I am grateful to your noble-hearted mother for thus training her sons to be noble-hearted men. I haven't been able to be much with any of you for many years, so it is perhaps natural we should not understand each other yet. Before long, however, I hope all my children will learn to love me as I love them. You must *try* to do so, Gilbert."

"Yes, sir, thank you, sir; I feel sure I will—some day," answered Gilbert whose voice still trembled.

"That's right. Now comfort your champion, little Theo, and let us finish our meal in peace," continued Lord Artingdale with one of his rare smiles, while his wife thanked God fervently in her heart for this promise of a better understanding between her husband and his youngest son.

CHAPTER II

FAREWELL TO OLD ENGLAND

IT was the very eve of departure and the whole house was a scene of indescribable confusion. Every room, hall and corridor seemed blocked up with piles of trunks, carefully packed furniture, go-carts, traveling-bags, and so forth, and Lord Artingdale walked restlessly about, alternately giving order and counter orders in sharp, peremptory tones, and angrily scolding the children who seemed to be constantly in the way of something or somebody. As for Gilbert, he'd been in trouble the whole day long and just as he was hurrying down to lunch he caught his foot in a piece of rope a servant had left dangling from a trunk near the head of the stairs and scared the family by falling noisily down the whole flight to the hall below. He was apparently not much the worse for his adventure, but his poor, tired, overstrung mother had been so upset that she could scarcely eat any lunch, and Lord Artingdale looked vexed and ate silently with an occasional angry glance at the offender.

In the midst of all this confusion some cousins came from quite a long distance to make a farewell visit that afternoon. Poor distracted Lady Arting-

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dale nearly wept when she heard of this further complication and setback, but on the whole it was a good thing, for the enforced rest and change of ideas were good for both Lord Artingdale and herself. The children were delighted to have their little cousins to talk and play with, and the servants and good Mlle. Lamotte were able to work away at the packing in peace, and therefore accomplished much more than they would otherwise have done.

After playing till they were tired the children sat about in groups in the dismantled nursery.

"I say, Bert, aren't you sorry you're not going to school with Philip and Emil?" asked Jack, one of his younger cousins.

"Oh, no! It's just bully to be going to Rome, and I'd hate to leave mother, and Theo and Mezelle."

"Who is Mezelle?" inquired Jack with a puzzled look.

"Why, it's Mlle. Lamotte," laughed Gilbert. "Didn't you know we all called her Mezelle?"

"What made you give her such a queer name?"

"Well, it was when we came to stay in England three years ago. We had an Irish cook and when she heard us call our governess Mademoiselle, she thought we said *Madam Mezelle*, and she said: 'It just beats me, it does, to know why them children and the Missus calls that there gurl *Madam*, when she ain't married and I'm a-goin' to call her plain *Miss*, which is all she's entitled to. But Mezelle's

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a sweetly pretty name. If I has a little gurl when I'm married, I'll call her name Mezelle,' and we thought it such a good idea we've called Mlle. Lamotte Mezelle ever since. Even mother and granny and bonne maman always call her Mezelle."

"Is she French? She seems just like an English woman," said Jack.

"Yes, Philip always says she is just like the bat in La Fontaine's fable. She can be as Frenchy as Frenchy can be when she likes, and so she pleases bonne maman, and she can seem as English as if she'd never been born in France and that pleases my father. Even Uncle Christopher likes her and he doesn't like many people. We love our Mezelle; she can tell the bulliest stories and she makes lessons seem pie easy with her ways of helping a fellow and in playtime she's as good a pal as any kid. She's just a corker at baseball."

"That's one of your American games, isn't it? I'm ever so fond of cricket. You should just learn that. It's awfully jolly."

"Cricket? Oh, I know all about it, but it's punk compared to baseball."

"What does punk mean? You fellows have such queer American words."

"Yes, I know. I mustn't say punk; father doesn't like it. But it's jolly expressive; it means—well, not much good, tame, sort of stupid."

"Cricket isn't anything of that. It's grand! You'll love it when you really know how to play.

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I say ! didn't your Mezelle say something about there being some prog for us down-stairs ? "

" Prog ? What do you mean by prog ? " asked Gilbert.

" Oh, why, something to eat."

" Oh, grub ! Yes, to be sure, let us run ; all the others have gone down."

" I'll get down first," shouted Jack.

" No, you won't," answered Gilbert, trying to rush past him. In their efforts to pass each other, the boys collided violently and Gilbert fell back on a neat erection of valises which toppled to the floor with a heavy thud. On the top of this pile had been a most costly and beautiful new traveling dressing bag of soft Russia leather with silver topped and cut glass fittings, a parting gift from some of Lord Artingdale's friends in his last diplomatic post. At the sound of the crash both Gilbert's parents and their guests came rushing up from the sitting-room and Lord Artingdale hastily opened his precious bag only to find that a bottle of crimson-tinted tooth wash had been smashed and that almost all the articles the bag contained were more or less stained with the brightly colored fluid as was the beautiful buff leather with which it was lined.

Lord Artingdale was beside himself with vexation and fairly stormed at Gilbert who stood dumbfounded with horror and dismay at the mischief he had thoughtlessly done.

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"You troublesome, clumsy, meddlesome child. You're a perfect nuisance to-day," said the angry father giving the boy a vigorous box on the ear. "Why can't you look where you're going instead of bundling along like a young bear?"

"I—I was running—the hall was rather dark," gasped poor Gilbert fairly trembling beneath his father's anger.

"I'm sure Gilbert did not mean to do any mischief. I know he is very sorry, Arthur," pleaded Lady Artingdale.

"Sorry! He has cause to be sorry, but that won't mend my beautiful new bag. I can never use it again, stained and spoiled as it is, and look at my ivory-backed brushes and my handkerchiefs, and everything, stained and ruined! Can't *anybody* keep this child out of mischief? Where's that governess of yours? Here! go to your room, Gilbert, and stay there for the rest of the day."

"Oh, please, Cousin Arthur, forgive him this time!" cried Jack's mother. "It would grieve all his cousins as much as Bertie himself if the child were punished to-day, and they may not see each other again for months or perhaps years. It was a distressing accident, I know, but Gilbert will try to be quieter in future, won't you, dear? Forgive him, Arthur, for my sake. Don't you remember how often you and I used to get into pickles of this kind when we were Gilbert's age?" she added with a smile.

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Lord Artingdale could not but comply with her request, but he was deeply annoyed about his travelling-bag and remained very stern and glum with his family after the cousins had departed. His temper was anything but improved by a stormy visit from his father, the Earl of Sheendon, who came not so much to say good-bye and wish them all a pleasant journey, as to protest violently against the elder boys being sent back to Stonyhurst, instead of going to Eton. That, their grandfather contended, was a place much more in keeping with their rank, where they would meet with other boys whose friendship might be of use to them in after life, instead of associating with papist paupers' sons.

"Judging by the bills I receive for my boys' schooling, I hardly fancy any paupers can afford to send their sons to Stonyhurst," answered the Viscount shortly, "and as to their studies, I examined the boys thoroughly before I would consent to their returning, and found they were decidedly in advance for their age, so, I don't see that a year or two more there will do them any harm."

"I do! The greatest harm," answered the Earl hotly. "Those Jesuits will put a spell over your boys and keep an influence over them all their lives, whereas, if the lads went to Eton, they'd soon have all that Romish nonsense knocked and teased out of them, and we might hope to get them to abjure their Popish faith in time."

"I have no right to make any effort to do so.

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I promised my wife that her children should be brought up Catholics, and I am a man of honor; besides, though I do not believe in their faith, I think it is a grand one and one to be respected."

"Look out, Arthur, or they'll be making a papist of you before long!" cried his father angrily.

"Me? No fear!" answered Lord Artingdale with a scornful laugh. "I'd as soon think of becoming a Buddhist."

"Then I don't see why you don't try to prevent your sons from continuing in that idolatrous worship, especially Philip, who will be Earl of Sheendon some day. Now, mind you, I don't mean to leave anything of mine to the Catholic Church, so if you wish to inherit anything more than just the entailed estate, you had better bear that in mind. The estate wouldn't be much good to you if you had nothing to keep it up with."

The Viscount's pride and temper were up, he answered pretty sharply and the father and son parted angrily, the Earl driving off without even taking leave of his daughter-in-law or the children.

The next day the Artingdales were fairly on their way to their various destinations and the children, who had felt sadly cramped and confined in their grand London home, were wild with delight at the prospect of a whole month's holiday among the woods and fields with riding and driving and boating and all the other delights of country life. The train journey down to Dover had been

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uneventful and fairly pleasant, as Lord Artingdale had thought it best to leave his family in their salon and travel in a smoking compartment. Traveling with children and babies he looked upon as unutterable misery, and to say the truth, the others were just as happy not to have him.

He had failed in his attempt to secure a private cabin for them on the boat, and the family party had to divide, Philip and Emil accompanying their father into the gentlemen's first-class cabin, while Gilbert, being only a little fellow, was allowed to stay with his mother, Mezelle and little Theo in the ladies' cabin. It was insufferably close and stuffy, its thirty or forty berths all occupied by ladies, children, and several howling babies, and Gilbert almost wished he had been considered grown up enough to go with his father.

"The ladies had better lie down at once. We have a very rough sea to-day and expect a good tossing before we get to Calais," remarked the stewardess as she helped to settle the two children on their "shelf" as Gilbert called it.

He tried to give himself very manly airs and was decidedly scornful when some of the ladies around began to succumb to the effects of the fearful pitching and tossing which seemed as if it must throw them out of their berths. Poor little Theo was wildly frightened and refused to be comforted by her brother, so she had to be carried into her mother's arms to whom she clung in direful mis-

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ery, with fright and sickness. Oh! those hours of crossing, they seemed as if they would never come to an end! Their journeys from New York to England or vice versa had always been a perfectly delightful time, but then this boat seemed a very cockle shell compared to the great Cunarders on which they had crossed the ocean, and the English Channel is about the worst bit of chopping sea there is on the surface of the globe.

After an hour or so, Lord Artingdale came to the entrance of the ladies' cabin to see how they were getting on and Mlle. Lamotte, who was the most valiant of the party, staggered forward to meet him.

"Yes, we've all been fearfully ill," she admitted, "but I think poor little Gilbert is the worst of all. I fancy he suffers as much morally as physically," she added with a faint attempt at a smile, "for he is so terribly mortified. He evidently thinks he's lost all his pretensions to manliness by allowing himself to be overcome with seasickness for the first time in his life."

"That's just like him; he certainly does try to live up to his ideals," answered Lord Artingdale with a laugh. "Well, if it's any comfort to the poor little chap, tell him that both his brothers and I have been as sick as dogs, though I'm generally a splendid sailor. The captain was just telling me that he'd seldom seen a rougher sea and that even some of the sailors were overcome with seasickness."

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"Really! Well, thank you, Lord Artingdale, I'll tell that to Gilbert and it will soothe his wounded pride, I know," said the governess as the diplomat disappeared again into the men's cabin.

When Mezelle went over to poor Gilbert and delivered his father's message, a look of intense relief came over the child's face and he murmured faintly: "Wasn't it kind of papa to tell you to tell me that!" but he was still more surprised and touched when a few minutes later his father bent over him with something in a glass, saying:

"Here, Bertie boy, drink this and you'll feel better."

Could this be his stern father? This man with the gentle loving voice, whose soft white hand brushed his touzled curls back from his face and settled him back among his pillows as tenderly and deftly as any woman could have done. Gilbert's gratitude was boundless and it was in quite a tremulous voice that he answered:

"Thank you—dear papa!" He'd never called Lord Artingdale papa before, but then neither had his father called him Bertie until that day, and the child's heart burned with a hitherto unknown love for his father.

It seemed only a few minutes after Lord Artingdale had left them once more, when there was a terrific crash and the vessel seemed to leap up in the air, quiver from keel to stern like a wounded creature in agony, and then come to a standstill. A

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period of fearful panic ensued, every one thinking the ship was about to sink and making a wild dash for the doors and companionways.

"Stay where you are! Keep cool," cried Lord Artingdale's voice commandingly, as he fought his way through the surging crowd of reeling, screaming women and caught little Theo up in his strong arms while he pushed the ladies and Gilbert back into a corner and stood before them to protect them from the crush.

"There's no danger! All keep cool!" shouted the officers from the top of the companion ladder. "Back to the cabins, all of you, or we'll have the hatchways shut down!"

With great trouble the frantic women were forced back into the cabin, many of them bruised and half fainting through having been knocked about, trodden on, or crushed against the side of the stairs. Phil and Emil had come to aid their father protect their own party and now helped him to assist many of the other frightened or wounded women and children. Then the first mate came down to tell them that they had, it is true, collided with a smaller vessel which had been literally dashed against them by the fury of the waves, but that their own ship had sustained little damage and could reach port in safety. As to the smaller boat, it was a complete wreck, but they had been able to save its crew, all of whom were safely on board.

This assurance partly calmed the frightened pas-

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sengers, though many of them still feared it might prove to be only a made-up story to keep them quiet and at every lurch of the ship they shrieked with fright, and cried and prayed. But all through this turmoil Lady Artingdale was brave and calm, and encouraged her children to trust in God's protection and keep perfectly quiet, and her husband could not but admire her piety and courage.

At last that wretched crossing was over, and exhausted, white faced and shivering, they all stood half dazed in the Calais station in the dawning light of a stormy morning among a crowd of passengers frantically rushing hither and thither, while the porters, railway officials and custom officers shouted and discoursed with a volubility that was fairly overwhelming. At last Lord Artingdale managed to pilot his family to the buffet where he settled them round a table in the hope that the steaming hot coffee and tempting looking food would restore them while he went to the custom house to see about the luggage, and Mlle. Lamotte went to change their English money into French. The hot coffee certainly did work wonders with the children who were eating with quite a fair appetite when their father returned and announced that their luggage was all right, their seats in the train reserved, and that they had a full half hour in which to eat and rest before their train would be ready to start. As for himself, he would have to leave by a P. L. M. train scheduled ten minutes before theirs, and to

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their astonishment they felt quite sorry to see him go.

When it came to Gilbert's turn to take leave of his father, the child not only allowed himself to be kissed by him, but whispered shyly :

" *I am* sorry you are not coming with us, father!" and Lord Artingdale's face lit up with a happy smile as he firmly grasped the small childish hand and answered :

" Thank you, Gilbert. I'm all the more glad to hear you say so because I know you really mean it. There's nothing like fellowship in trouble to draw one together, is there? "

CHAPTER III

THE PICNIC IN THE FOREST

THE Countess of Sheendon received them unusually affectionately and was much concerned at their pallor and their look of utter fatigue. She insisted upon their going in to luncheon just as they were in their rumpled traveling costumes and immediately afterwards ordered them all off to bed. To say the truth, they were only too glad to find themselves between those lavender perfumed sheets in soft springy beds which were a great contrast to the berths in which they had spent such wretched hours. The heavy tapestry curtains to the windows were closed, completely darkening the rooms and in a very few minutes they were all sound asleep and never awakened till the dressing bell for dinner sounded at seven o'clock. Half an hour was none too long to make themselves fit to present themselves at "bonne maman's" table, so every one jumped up in haste and began an elaborate toilet. Mezelle had been up a little before the others and was all readiness to help each and every one, carefully inspecting the young people before they went down to the spacious drawing-room in which "bonne maman" was waiting for them in full evening dress just

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as if she was expecting company. On their arrival the children had been kissed and hugged by her, French fashion, but now the ceremony of hand kissing was gone through most solemnly and then, as her three grandsons stood before her, she put up her gold eye-glasses and surveyed them critically, and with evident satisfaction.

"I really could hardly recognize you when you first arrived, my poor children," she exclaimed, "so now I must have a good look at you. Yes, you are growing finely and have all improved in appearance. Phil will be exactly like his father, tall and commanding and distinguished, even handsome. Oh, you needn't blush, I'm not saying that to compliment you, for it's no merit of yours if you're strikingly good looking. In fact, I consider it almost a misfortune for a man to be beautiful. You ought to have been a girl, you'd have been one of the noted beauties of society. As it is, you'll have all the girls wild about you and must be careful your good looks don't lead you into mischief. Emil, I'm afraid, will be rather stout and dumpy ; he's a regular roly poly, isn't he ? As to Gilbert, that's the little Yankee all over ; enterprising, clever, impulsive, what you call go-ahead and a pickle, but not bad 'au fond.' Still, if I'd been wise I'd have insured every article of my property against accidents of all kinds before he arrived, though I'm glad to see him, the 'little terror !' Whatever you do, Gilbert, don't go into my boudoir for I have

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some china there that is simply priceless, and try not to drown yourself in the lake, for funerals are expensive and unpleasant. Ah! here is Dubois coming to announce dinner. Phil, you may take me in to dinner. Emil, offer your arm to your mother. Bertie must bring up the rear."

And so, as ceremoniously as if they were at a court function, they marched through the great salon and into the equally spacious dining-room in which fifty to sixty guests could sit at ease, as it occupied a whole wing of the château. Set into the panels of its walls were charming but highly unnatural pictures by Watteau and Boucher representing elegant shepherds and shepherdesses in most dainty costumes disporting themselves among sylvan scenes. Over the four doors of this room there were also smaller pictures of the same epoch and style.

The dinner was a sumptuous and stately one, footmen in livery waiting at table under the direction of a solemn butler who gave himself the airs of a prime minister or president. Of course, conversation under such circumstances had to be of a very general character. But in spite of its rather oppressive pomp, the boys enjoyed the choice repast provided by the chef and his aides, and Philip declared that nowhere in any country they had visited had he ever tasted anything to compare with the meals at "bonne maman's." The Countess was flattered, and smilingly remarked that her eldest

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grandson was already quite a man of the world and had the knack of saying the right thing in the prettiest way. "That's where his French blood comes in," she added sententiously.

So the first evening passed quite pleasantly and though Gilbert *did* upset his glass of wine and water on the spotless table-cloth, his grandmother graciously excused him, saying such accidents happened even to grown persons and the butler solemnly and deftly sopped up the liquid with a cloth without looking too indignant about it.

The next morning the children were eager to get up early and hasten out to see all their favorite animals and haunts. The ponies were petted and fed with apples, the good dogs were made much of, the head gardener and his wife were visited and their poultry much admired. Altogether there was such running, shouting, and laughing around the usually quiet old château that it seemed as if, like the Sleeping Beauty's castle, it had only just wakened out of a long sleep. One might very well imagine it to be some such abode of romance, for it was one of those stately ancient mansions, centuries old, its façade and great square tower black with age. It was built close up against an almost precipitous cliff-like hill, so that what were the third story rooms of the front of the house, opened on to a corridor leading straight out to the top of the hill, into what was called the upper park. This was very convenient, as all the rooms given up to the

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children, their governess and servants were on this floor and therefore they were able to run in and out without in any way disturbing the Countess or any of the other members of the household.

During the first week or so after their arrival, a few plants in the perfectly kept flower beds were broken, marks of insufficiently wiped shoes were occasionally found on the stair carpets and "bonne maman" sometimes sent a maid up to complain of there being too much noise coming from the boys' rooms, but, on the whole, things went wonderfully smooth and no exciting event occurred until one morning, when the Countess announced she had received a letter from the de Neslacs. These were friends living at a considerable distance and they announced their intention of driving over that very day to lunch and spend the afternoon, bringing with them their five children and governess. The Artingdales were delighted at the prospect, for these children were old friends of theirs and particularly pleasant comrades. All the morning was spent therefore in making preparations for having a delightful time with them. It was arranged, that after lunch, they should take the boats and row up from the lake along a little creek into the deep woods. There they would get out and enjoy themselves, partake of a delicious collation, play games and chatter, and have all the fun they wanted without any fear of disturbing their elders or being reproved for lack of society manners. They were to

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be under the charge of the two governesses, both sweet, lovable women, as indulgent as they were conscientious, who would be only too glad to have a long chat together while keeping a watchful eye that no harm came to their charges.

Long before lunch time all the Artingdale children were dressed in immaculately clean suits, pretty, but very loose and simple as befitted the occasion. As soon as they were ready they began to be restless, constantly rushing to the window to look out for the approaching automobiles. At last Mezelle, who dreaded lest they should get into mischief in their excitement, suggested they should go down and wait in the avenue leading to the great courtyard before the château, all armed with their kodaks and ready to take a snapshot of the speeding automobiles.

"Had I better set mine at the fiftieth of a second?" asked Gilbert.

"Oh, no! at the hundredth," exclaimed Phil; "they will be rushing right past us."

But the boys waited and waited, and when at last a single omnibus-like auto did arrive, it was slowly crawling along, having met with an accident to one of the tires, so that the hundredth of a second was anything but necessary.

The luncheon was unusually sumptuous and the children, who were at a smaller table at one end of the room with their governesses, were allowed to talk in a subdued tone, a privilege not granted at

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the principal table and which they appreciated all the more. The de Neslacs were all bright, pretty, lovable children, three tall girls of from ten to fourteen and two younger boys, very quick, dark-eyed, Frenchy little fellows, rather overdressed for the occasion, specially Guy, the baby of the family whose long hair hung in masses of dark curls on his little sapphire velvet page boy's suit, with large flat collar of costly lace. He was but five and devoted himself exclusively and enthusiastically to Theo who, though only three, reciprocated his admiration so that they were inseparable all day. The other boy, Jacques, was nine years old and considered himself quite a man already, so that he was eager to join the older group of children, but finding they rather slighted him, fell back upon Gilbert as a companion.

After luncheon and coffee were over, they divided into groups, the two elder girls, Yvonne and Henriette, Theo and Guy accompanying Phil and Mezelle in the first boat, while the others were under the charge of Emil and Mlle. de Kar nec, the de Neslacs' governess. There had been unusually little rain that year, so the narrow creek which supplied the lake was very shallow and they had to row most carefully to avoid getting stranded. But the boys were clever boatmen, having rowed almost from babyhood and knowing every rock and cranny of the stream, so they all landed without any difficulty and had a most glorious afternoon playing in

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the woods, telling weird fairy tales and finally devouring their plentiful collation with fine appetite.

It had been one of those gloriously lovely days in early September when a first touch of gold and russet adds an extra mellow beauty to the landscape and the atmosphere, and, though sunny and warm, quite free from sultriness. Our young people were in such a dense part of the forest and were so much engrossed with their interesting conversation and the good things they were eating, that they had not noticed great lowering clouds coming up on both sides of the horizon. It was only when one of them suddenly obscured the sun's rays that Mezelle looked up and anxiously exclaimed that she feared a thunder-storm, and therefore they must return in all haste to the château.

"In any case it is nearly four o'clock so we must hurry," added Mlle. de Kar nec, "for Monsieur and Madame de Neslac will be waiting for us to go home."

So with great laughter and scrambling they began to pack up the remains of their repast and carry the things to the boats. Before they had half done, however, they heard the first rumblings of the thunder and as Theo and Yvonne were both much scared of thunder-storms, it was decided that Phil with his boat load should go on ahead leaving Emil and Gilbert to finish collecting the things and row the rest of the party home.

"Hurry off," cried Mlle. de Kar nec, "for they

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say it is very dangerous to be under trees in a storm and if you hurry you may get in before the rain."

"Oh! God can take care of us as well under trees as anywhere else," cried Philip cheerfully. "We won't be long getting home anyhow. Don't hurry *too* much, Emil," he cried back as he rowed off. "Most haste, less speed, you know, and you might get stuck in the mud and be ever so long getting off."

"Really I think Phil need hardly trouble about Emil's hurrying too much," laughed Marguerite de Neslac and all joined in her merriment, for Emil was a proverbially slow, easy-going lad.

Still, he was rather nervous that afternoon and felt his responsibility in piloting these people home, so that he rowed with slightly less composure than usual. There was a rather nasty turn in the creek about half-way home and he shouted to Mlle. de Kar nec, who had the rudder, to pull to the right. Just then there was a blinding flash of lightning almost immediately followed by a terrific crashing peal of thunder which seemed to make the great trees shudder to their very roots, and in her trepidation the governess vigorously pulled to the left. Another second and with a dull, sloughing noise the boat grounded and stuck firmly in the deep mud. In vain they labored and struggled to get her off while the children shrieked and the storm came on apace, peal after peal of thunder fairly deafening

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them while the sky seemed abaze with the lightning.

Being unable to float the boat, they began to wonder if they had better not abandon it and attempt to walk homé or find shelter of some kind. To the left of the boat was a narrow band of what seemed like grass-covered land, beyond which was a dense growth of brambly underbrush.

"We couldn't possibly pass through all that," exclaimed Gilbert pointing at the dense hedge, "but if I get out on to that strip of land I may be able to push the boat off," and so saying he jumped out, but uttered a shriek of horror, in which all joined, as he was seen to sink to his waist and seemed about to disappear altogether.

"Help! help! I'm sinking! Jesus, Mary, save me!" wildly cried the child, while Emil, pale as death and careless of all danger to himself, stretched over the side of the boat and clutched his brother by his coat collar. For a minute it seemed as if he would be dragged after him, but Mlle. de Karnec came to his assistance and pulled him back with one hand while with the other she grabbed hold of Gilbert's hair, the only available thing she found to grasp. With their combined weight the boat seemed about to roll over on its side and pitch them all out into the treacherous quicksands, so Emil cried peremptorily: "You others lean on the other side of the boat, quick, quick!" and at last by dint of frantic efforts they managed to haul

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Gilbert back into the boat. Not only had God thus far answered their agonized prayers, but the lurch they gave the boat when dragging poor Gilbert in, disengaged their little craft and to their intense relief they found themselves afloat again.

The boat under Philip's care had landed safely before the worst of the storm broke forth and they all hurried to the château through the blinding rain, Mlle. Lamotte carrying little Theo, and Philip, Guy de Neslac. They told the anxious parents that the others were not far behind them and then hurried up-stairs to change their wet things. As time went on and the second party did not appear every one became seriously anxious, and the gentlemen and servants were just starting in search of them when they drew up safely at the landing place drenched to the skin and bespattered from head to foot with shiny black mud of anything but a perfumed kind, while Gilbert looked as if he had been dipped in pitch and made pools of black, odorous liquid wherever he stood.

"Oh, my dears, my children, my darlings!" exclaimed the ladies who had rushed down to the hall to meet them. "How anxious we have been about you! Where have you been? What has happened?" they added in dismay as they caught sight of Gilbert.

"Of course Bertie was the cause of all the mischief; one might have known that. Take him round to the kitchen and up the back stairs to

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the bath room, Armand," cried the Countess to one of the men servants who quickly complied, while the others hurried into the château exclaiming :

"It wasn't Gilbert's fault at all, Madame; on the contrary he was the one who saved us and oh! if God and Our Lady hadn't heard our prayers he would certainly have been swallowed up in the mud and killed before our very eyes!"

"It was really my fault," said Mlle. de Karnec humbly. "I was so terrified by a great peal of thunder that at the most critical corner I steered to the left instead of to the right and that sent the boat aground."

"Well, all's well that ends well," cried Emil cheerfully, "and we may be thankful we are in, out of this awful storm."

And indeed the storm had been bad while they were in the woods, but it was nothing to what it was now. The thunder and lightning seemed almost incessant, the wind blew a hurricane, the trees seemed as if bowed to the earth and the rain came down in sheets.

"Ah, yes, we may indeed thank God for having saved our dear children," exclaimed Madame de Neslac as she embraced them tenderly with her eyes full of tears.

"They ought to take their wet things off at once —what can we do for them, ma mère?" asked Lady Artingdale of the Countess.

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"I'll see to Marguerite if you will go and look after Bertie, poor fellow," she answered. "The elder girls are putting on some of my things and Marguerite must do the same. They won't be a very good fit," she added laughing, "but they will be dry anyhow. Mezelle is dressing Guy and will do the same for Jacques and I'm sure she will be able to lend Mlle. de Kar nec all she needs."

In an incredibly short time all the young people were dressed in more or less well fitting garments and all hastened down to the great drawing-room, for there seemed some sort of comfort in being a large party and encouraging each other, while the elements seemed as if they would tear up everything and shake down the massive old château itself. The shutters of the drawing-room had been closed, the lamps lighted and the Countess and her guests all sat in a huddled group ever awaiting with bated breath for the next terrific crash. They seemed to succeed each other with fearful rapidity and the rain continued to come down as if for a second deluge.

"Well, you can have no thought of going home to-day!" exclaimed the Countess. "You must make up your mind to dine and spend the night with us."

"I'm afraid we'll be imposing ——" began the Marquis de Neslac apologetically.

"Not a bit of it! We'll be delighted, so it is all settled," added their hostess cheerfully, as she rang

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the bell and gave orders for four of the guest rooms to be prepared for her visitors.

“Don’t you think we might say the rosary?” hazarded Gilbert hesitatingly. He had only just joined them after indulging in a good hot bath and thorough massage from his mother, and he did not feel quite sure how his grandmother would like his making this suggestion. Everybody jumped at it, however, for in this terrific storm all felt the need of loving protection from on high and a minute later all had pulled out their rosaries and were saying it with unusual fervor. By the time it was ended, the first fury of the storm seemed to have abated, though it was still bad enough and Lady Artingdale proposed that they should say another five decades in thanksgiving for their children having got home safe and sound.

“Yes, and specially in thanksgiving for Gilbert’s having been saved from the quicksands,” they all exclaimed, and again the rosary was recited with much devotion and many tears of thankfulness from the two mothers.

Little by little the violence of the storm subsided and though it still lightened and thundered and the rain continued for hours, they were of a milder character so that every one began to feel less nervous. The dinner was a merry one, being, as Madame de Neslac laughingly observed, rather of the fancy dress style. The three girls were specially delighted at being in long dresses for the first time

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in their lives and the two little boys felt uncommonly comfortable in their little friends' simple suits. The evening was a particularly enjoyable one, even the grown people joining in music and merry games of blind man's buff, hunt the slipper, post, and a very exciting French game called "The Poisoned Handkerchief." When they finally went to bed that night the children all declared that in spite of their short time of fright and danger, they had had one of the most delightful days of their life, and they felt very sorry that the next morning turned out a beautifully fine one so that there was no further reason why the de Neslacs should stay any longer. The young people parted very regretfully and when they had gone the Countess remarked to her daughter-in-law:

"It was all very well this time, but next year I shall have to receive you all at La Roche Altée, for the children will be quite young people then and Yvonne and Marguerite are far too attractive to be thrown in the way of Phil. Emil wouldn't matter so much, but Phil will be Earl of Sheendon and must make a grander match than that."

"Phil and Emil! Why, ma mère, it will be years upon years before those two boys begin to think of such a thing as marriage! They are mere children yet!"

"Phil is very old considering his age and he is nearly fourteen."

"Thank God! we have at least ten years before

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us in which to be in peace on that subject. But I love La Roche Altée so I will be glad enough to stay there next time," added Lady Artingdale with a smile.

CHAPTER IV

THE RUNAWAY

THOUGH Gilbert had kept up very pluckily all the afternoon and evening, after his terrible scare, he had been far more shaken by it than he had cared to admit. That night he was restless and feverish, and startled his brothers and Mezelle by sudden cries of "Help! I'm sinking!" uttered in his sleep. The governess got up several times to pacify him and give him doses of "fleur d'oranger" (essence of orange blossoms) which is so much used in France as a soothing remedy for the nerves. She also bathed his forehead with good American witch-hazel, and towards midnight the child's temperature abated, he fell into a more peaceful sleep and the next morning he was able to get up, though he had rather a bad headache and looked pale and fatigued. "Bonne maman" was for keeping him in bed and sending for a doctor, but his mother very sensibly decided that fresh air and pleasant occupations, which would prevent his mind from dwelling on his late painful experience, would be a far better cure for the child.

While he was finishing dressing there was a loving call at his door and in came little Theo, look-

ing as fresh as a daisy in her clean pink frock with her masses of dark hair tied up on the top of her head by a large pink bow to match and her long curls hanging in clusters on her back and shoulders. Never, I think, had such a small little maiden such masses of beautiful hair, and "bonne maman" often made long speeches on the necessity of cutting it off, as she declared it would take all her strength from her. But Lady Artingdale only smiled and said that Theo was the strongest of all her children and that she would consider it wicked to interfere with the lovely hair God had given her.

"Theo thought you were *never* coming, Bertie," she exclaimed, running up to him and throwing her arms round his neck. "Won't you come and play with little Sissy?"

"Yes, all right, Fairy," answered Gilbert, hugging her vigorously and looking proudly at what he declared to be the most beautiful little kiddie a fellow ever had for a sister. "But poor Bertie has an awful headache this morning," he added plaintively. "That's why I got up so late."

"Oh! I'm sorry!" Theo's eyes were full of wistful sadness and her pretty dark brows were puckered into an anxious frown as she stroked her brother's forehead with her little cool hand. All of a sudden her face cleared and she exclaimed cheerfully: "Wait a minute! I'll ask the good Jesus to make you well again," and falling on her knees beside a chair the child closed her eyes tightly,

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clasped her hands reverently and said, as if speaking to a loved friend standing before her :

"Dear Jesus! sweet little Jesus! *please* make my Bertie's head quite well. *Please do!*" she added more pleadingly. "Little Theo wishes it."

Then making the sign of the cross she jumped up merrily, clapping her hands and crying : "There! you're quite well now, my Bertie, aren't you? I asked the dear Jesus to cure you."

Gilbert tried to think he felt better, indeed he felt convinced he ought to be, for little Theo's faith in her own prayers was so intense that it was contagious. She always prayed in this way for every one's cure and the strangest thing about it was, that even if her loved ones were not *apparently* any better for it her faith never wavered. She felt sure they *really were* better, even though they did not know it, or that in any case they would be better very soon, and so Theo assured her brother he was sure to be. With this comforting thought the two children hurried out into the park to play and began by going to unchain Turc, the beautiful Pyrenean dog who was the guardian of the château. Turc was a magnificent creature, as large and stately as a St. Bernard, with splendid curly coat, white with tan markings. His bark was loud and ominous, and he had a way of snarling and showing a fine double row of teeth to tramps and such like which struck terror to their souls, but he was at heart the gentlest and most loving creature on

earth. He was always free at night, and taken out for a long walk every day, but during the summer he was chained up the rest of the time on account of his little respect for flower beds and his naughty trick of digging a great hole in any shady spot with soft soil, making a sort of miniature grave in which he would lie down and keep cool.

Now it was autumn, however, the flower beds were past their prime and the children, who were all extremely fond of animals, were allowed to let him off the chain and take him with them. Both "bonne maman" and their mother felt that under his protection the children were quite safe; if they fell into the water he would pull them out; if a viper were around he would kill it and woe to the strange man or woman who would dare to put a finger on either of them in his presence.

It was pretty to see little Theo with the great dog who would walk solemnly beside the tiny mite, nearly as tall as she was, as she leaned on him with her chubby arm thrown round his neck—Topoto, she always called him, though why she did so nobody ever knew, for Turc was quite as easy a name and strangely enough, Theo had never talked baby talk in her life. She had learned to speak very early and very correctly, the only peculiarity about her pronunciation being that, having an Italian nurse, she gave an Italian pronunciation to certain words and rolled her "R's" in the most amusing way. There seemed to be about three of

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them to other people's one. Theo was passionately fond of Topoto and never came out without bringing him some delicacy, occasionally even keeping for him the *one* piece of candy which "bonne maman" always offered each of them when they went dutifully to pay their respects to her in the morning. In French châteaux there is no general breakfast as in our homes, but each person's tray is taken up to their room and a large tray goes up to the nursery where all the children partake of theirs. Theo always declared Topoto was very fond of sweets and occasionally had the unheard-of courage to ask "bonne maman" for an extra piece for him, but this she felt must be done rarely and with discretion. I don't know for sure if Topoto really appreciated candy. He certainly swallowed it like a pill, wagged his tail very much and looked gratefully at little Theo, but so he did when she offered him great big horse-chestnuts, which, in spite of his efforts, he seemed unable to swallow. After thanking her effusively with tail and eyes, he would turn them round and round in his mouth and then, when he thought she wasn't looking, go and spit them out behind a bush. He was such a polite, gentlemanly dog!

But he was not the only companion of their walks. There was also Pompon, the very dignified, not to say stuck up, black poodle, who was "bonne maman's" special pet, and who slept on a silken cushion in her room at night, accompanied

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her on her drives and gave himself airs as if the whole place belonged to him. He was not so fond of the children as was good Turc, still, he occasionally deigned to go with them. He looked on with undisguised scorn, however, when he saw that great Topoto playing hide-and-seek with them, running races, going after sticks, jumping hoops, and so forth. How a respectable dog could so demean himself, Pompon could *not* understand; as for himself, he would have been afraid of getting his coat out of order, disturbing the bow and tuft of curls on the top of his head and the elegant little frills round his legs and tail, so he simply trotted along daintily, feeling that he was an aristocrat and must live up to it. He was a much older dog than Turc, had been at the château long before him and only just tolerated his presence on the premises. Good, loving Turc would have liked to make friends and have an occasional gambol together, but Pompon resolutely refused any such proposals.

Gilbert's headache certainly was getting better and better, and the children found the morning air so delightful, that half unconsciously they had strayed much further than usual down the great avenue leading to the highroad, by the side of which was a large water mill and several farms belonging to the estate.

Now it so happened that a farmer from a distance who had brought his corn to be ground, had

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left his fine pair of stalwart dapple gray horses and huge wagon standing at the entrance while he had a chat with the miller, and just then what should rush across the road, right in front of the horses, but a little cotton-tailed rabbit. Why good, sensible creatures like horses should object to the sight of that cute little white fluffy tail I can't imagine, but one of them did, so it shied and reared which frightened its mate, and a minute later they were running away frantically, the heavy lumbering cart jolting after them with a thundering noise. Unconscious of all danger, the children were just walking along the avenue astonished at the commotion, but not seeing the runaway which was hidden from sight by a bend in the road, when Turc, realizing a coming danger, pulled little Theo back by her skirt, afterwards scampering up the steep bank and barking to the children to follow him. They did so and were soon in perfect safety, but scared by their screams and the noise of the approaching vehicle, poor Pompon stood dazed and as if paralyzed in the middle of the road. Another minute and he would have been trampled and crushed to death had not good Turc bounded forward, caught him up by the scruff of the neck with his teeth and dragged the little dog to safety, just as the horses and heavy wagon dashed past the terrified children in their mad rush towards the château. As for Pompon, he stood irresolute, hardly knowing whether to be

grateful to Turc for saving him or to resent his having picked him up so unceremoniously and ruffled his toilet and the bow on his head. After a minute's hesitation, however, he wagged his tail graciously and gave a few short barks which were, I suppose, meant to express his thanks, as Turo looked duly gratified.

The driver of the team had rushed by in hot pursuit and now the sound of the runaway had suddenly ceased, still neither dogs nor children felt inclined to get down from their place of safety, for they were scared lest the horses should come back again in some way or other. Just as they were hesitating what to do next, they heard loving voices calling them anxiously and Mezelle, Lady Artingdale, the nurse, servants and even the Countess herself, came running breathlessly in search of them. The horses had been stopped right in front of the château and every one had been terrified lest some accident should have happened to the children. The next minute Lady Artingdale had clasped her darlings in her arms while Pompon with a complaining yelp made one bound into those of his mistress. Then the children, both talking at once, gave a graphic description of their danger and fright, and of Pompon's narrow escape and Turc's care of them and gallant rescue of his little comrade. Needless to say how the good dog was petted and praised.

"Good, brave, sensible Turc!" said the Countess,

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stroking him with one hand while she carried Pompon on the other arm; "he shall be rewarded as he deserves."

"Will you give him some candy, bonne maman?" asked Theo.

"Why, no!" answered the Countess laughing. "I think he would prefer a good beefsteak which he shall have as a titbit, and he shall not be chained up any more this year if he behaves himself. That is what will please him most, for he hates his chain!"

"Yes, though he is far less unhappy now that his kennel is close to the kitchen window because he gets so much petting from the servants," observed Lady Artingdale. "I'm so glad you are going to let him be free, ma mère; it always distressed me to see him chained up."

"Why didn't you say so!" exclaimed her mother-in-law. "You might have known I would not wish to spoil your time here in any way. Well, we *are* having a series of accidents," she continued, "one yesterday, one to-day. I wonder what the third will be."

"Let us trust there will be no third," laughed Lady Artingdale. "Though these two have been comparatively harmless in their results, they have scared us badly and I, for one, would prefer to have no more such emotions for a day or two. Before we go in, let us stop at the chapel to thank our dear Lord for having protected you children," she

added as they entered the château courtyard, to the left of which stood the beautiful chapel in which the Blessed Sacrament was always kept.

"I'll follow you in a minute, but first I'll go and speak to that man about leaving his horses as he did," said the Countess, going forward towards the farm laborer, who stood looking very sheepish by the side of his team, which had at last been quieted and which he was preparing to drive home. The Countess certainly did give him "a bit of her mind" and the man resolved that if ever he left the horses unattended again, it would surely not be in the neighborhood of her ladyship's château.

CHAPTER V

A TRYING AFTERNOON

THE next day happened to be a Thursday, the Countess' day at home, and during the whole of that afternoon, carriages and automobiles kept driving up to the entrance hall, many of them having come from long distances, as all the neighbors were anxious to see Lady Artingdale before her departure for Rome.

Few of these people had brought their children with them, but at last the little Artingdales espied a huge auto in which, besides a number of grown-up folk, were three children, two boys and a girl, whom they recognized to be the de Morignacs, some distant cousins of theirs for whom they had little liking. These children were pretentious, spoiled, and inclined to tease the little ones and be cruel to the animals about the place. The Artingdales' American grandfather was one of the most enthusiastic workers for the Humane and Audubon Societies and he had taught them all to love animals and birds, and take pleasure in watching and protecting them, instead of looking upon the killing of defenseless, inoffensive creatures as great sport. This the de Morignacs looked upon as most

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ridiculous and they quite enjoyed teasing their "American cousins" by persecuting every living thing they came across. It was little wonder, therefore, that their arrival was looked upon by our little friends with no great pleasure.

"Oh, dear! what a horrid afternoon we will have," cried Gilbert despairingly. "I do wish some of our chums had come instead."

"Well, I'll go with you to see that your cousins don't torment you too much," said Mezelle with a smile. "Phil, you and Emil will be dears to take possession of Christian and Etienne and try to keep them out of mischief while the little ones and I grapple with Ludovic. He's enough for us to contend with."

"All right, we'll do our best, Mezelle," said Phil, good-naturedly. "If Ludovic is *too* much of a cad, just give me a call and I'll settle him for you," he added as they hastened down to receive their guests.

It certainly was a trying afternoon. They all sauntered out into the château grounds where Etienne gave herself no end of airs, complained of everything, sneered at everybody and made herself generally unpleasant, though she was amiable compared to her brothers, who seemed to exert their whole ingenuity in trying to tease and distress their cousins, and more particularly Gilbert and Theo. Bertie bore it pretty well, but his little sister, who was used to being petted and made much of by

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every one and more than all by her brothers, was indignant and tearful. The climax came when Christian, in answer to her exclamation of delight at seeing a beautiful thrush, singing its merriest in a neighboring bush, took up a stone and flung it at the sweet singer which, with a pitiful chirp of pain, fell struggling to the ground.

The Artingdales all rushed forward to pick it up, hoping it was only wounded and they might nurse it back to health, but with a quiver the bright eyes closed forever and the beautiful bird lay dead in Theo's hand, while the little girl burst into a passion of tears over it and Philip indignantly rebuked Christian for his wanton cruelty.

"Bah!" exclaimed the lad with a sneer, "what is a thrush more or less? Pity I can't find a dozen or so more to kill; they'd make a very good pie."

"You shan't kill them here! I'll go and tell bonne maman," screamed Theo wildly and in spite of all efforts to keep her back, she rushed howling towards the château and was soon caught up in the arms of her mother, who had rushed out at the sound of her heart-broken cries and now came to meet the others to inquire what had happened. Christian did not dare be insolent to her as he had sometimes been to Mlle. Lamotte during their walk, and she told him pretty plainly what she thought of his cruel deed while he listened with a rather sneering grin and muttered something about "American ideas." Still he gave a grudging

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promise not to hurt any other creature on the estate and Lady Artingdale went back to the drawing-rooms taking with her little Theo and the dead thrush.

A short time later there was another commotion for Pompon had stepped out in his dignified way to have a little airing, and as soon as the de Morignac boys saw him they began teasing him and when he snarled and showed his teeth, Christian caught him up by his tail and threw him quite a distance on the road. Pompon rolled over in the dust but was on his feet again in a minute and with a savage howl made a dash at Christian who, coward as he was, took to his heels and ran for all he was worth towards the château. But if he *was* old, Pompon could still outrun any boy and wild with anger and mortification, he overtook his persecutor just before he reached the house, flew at his leg and bit him right through his trousers. Christian yelled as if he were being murdered, Mezelle and the Artingdales beat off Pompon and finally took him indoors and shut him up, and the Countess, Lady Artingdale and all the guests came rushing out to see what was the matter. Madame de Morignac cried and wept, declaring the dog must have hydrophobia and ought to be shot at once and her boy taken to Pasteur's Institute ; the Countess indignantly protested that *her* Pompon was perfectly healthy and no more mad than Christian himself, and Monsieur de Morignac, hearing Mlle. Lamotte's account of

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the incident, declared his son had got nothing more than he deserved and that he was a fool to make such a fuss over a mere scratch. It was some time, however, before things calmed down and Christian's hurt had been carefully attended to. Then, to fill in the time, all the young people were called indoors to partake of a very elaborate collation.

When they went out again, Mezelle thought that some stirring game would keep the boys out of mischief and proposed one after another which they declined to join in, until Gilbert suggested leaping with poles, an exercise they all enjoyed very much. This the de Morignacs consented to do, and they all adjourned to the neighboring fields and paddock, it being strictly forbidden to leap in the grounds around the château.

The boys had been fairly busy and pleasant over this for half an hour or so, during which time Mezelle had done her utmost to amuse the scornful and discontented Etienne. Then the de Morignacs declared they were tired of leaping and Christian proposed going back to the château to have a game of billiards with the two elder boys.

"Very well," said Mezelle, "then Etienne and I will go and saunter in the upper park. You two younger boys can take the poles round to the stables and put them away, then join us and we'll think up something else to do while the others have their game. Mind you do not use your poles after you cross the little bridge and get into the château

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grounds for you know Madame la Comtesse strictly forbids it," she added warningly.

Hardly had the others gone out of sight, when Ludovic looked after Mlle. Lamotte, made a hideous grimace as if in defiance, then, as they had crossed the bridge, he put his pole to the ground and prepared to leap. Gilbert ran forward indignantly and tried to stop him but Ludovic was too quick for him, leaped—and fell with a crash right in a magnificent clump of pampas grass which stood on one side of the château lawn and which was the pride of the Countess' heart. Two great stems were broken, others crushed and the whole clump disfigured. Ludovic uttered an exclamation of dismay when he saw the damage he had done, then turning angrily on Gilbert, he accused him of having deliberately pushed him into it to get him into trouble with the Countess and raved and stormed at the little fellow, calling him all the names he could think of. When his fury had been spent, he stopped abruptly, shamed by the look of scorn and disgust on honest little Gilbert's face.

"After all, there's no great harm done!" he muttered apologetically, trying to stick up the pampas plumes again. "Nobody saw us do it, and if any one asks us about it, we can say we saw Turc break these down."

"But he didn't do it! He wasn't near it, dear old fellow!" exclaimed Gilbert hotly.

"Oh, that doesn't matter. He's a dog and can't

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speak to deny it and he's big and strong and bumbly and he's broken things before, so Cousin will think he did it. He'll get the flogging and we won't be punished, that's all."

"And do you think *I'd* tell a lie and allow good Turc to be flogged and chained up again when he doesn't deserve it?" cried Gilbert indignantly. "No, I would not do such a cruel, dishonorable thing!"

"You're not going to tell on me," shrieked Ludovic. "You needn't, for I'll say you pushed me into it, there! and I'm the guest and Cousin won't dare to punish me, but she'll punish you good."

"I don't care. You can say what you like, but you needn't be afraid of my telling on you. I'm not a sneak or telltale. I'm an Artingdale and my mother's sons are gentlemen," added the little fellow, drawing himself up proudly and turning his back upon his cousin. Then picking up the poles, he carried them to the stable after which he walked deliberately to the château, Ludovic anxiously following him, determined to hear what explanation the child was going to give of his misdeed.

The room was full of guests, many of whom were already tired of the interruptions caused by the children and Gilbert and Ludovic were received with cold, reproving glances. For a minute Gilbert hesitated, then stepping firmly up to his grandmother he said in a low voice :

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"I'm so sorry, bonne maman. We were leaping with poles and—and your lovely pampas grass got broken—not all, but some of it."

"My pampas grass broken! and of course *you* did it, Gilbert. How often have I told you not to leap on this side of the bridge? Where was Mlle. Lamotte?"

"She had gone to the upper park with Etienne. We were taking the poles back to the stables, Ludovic and I," blurted Gilbert.

"And pray which of you broke the pampas grass?" asked the Countess sternly.

"I didn't, Cousin," put in Ludovic with an air of injured innocence. "It was Gilbert that——"

"I knew it must be Gilbert. Why didn't you say so right away, instead of saying the pampas grass was broken?" she continued, turning angrily on poor Bertie.

"I'm very sorry it was broken," answered the child reddening. "I couldn't help it."

"Couldn't help it! It's just like your impudence to say such a thing. I would have forgiven you, Gilbert, if you'd told me the truth honestly instead of trying to excuse yourself, but as it is you may go up to your room for the remainder of the day and dine on bread and water. That will teach you not to disobey my orders in future. Now say good-bye to your friends and go."

The whole company looked glum and Gilbert's small hand was grasped with unusual friendliness

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by many, while several ladies kissed his flushed face caressingly and many suspicious glances were cast at Ludovic who was anything but a favorite in the neighborhood.

A diversion was made almost immediately after Bertie's departure by the entrance of a first cousin of the Countess, whom the children were very fond of and whom they all called Uncle George. He had stopped for a few minutes on his way to spend the afternoon and night at the house of some friends, a few miles off, and before he left he promised to come to lunch the next morning and stay for a couple of days. He was an old bachelor, one of those hearty, jolly fellows who have always lots of amusing anecdotes to tell and who are ever ready to do a friendly turn for any of their acquaintances, and he was a general favorite in all the country round, so in the excitement of seeing him, the emotion over Gilbert and the pampas grass was quite forgotten, to the great relief of Ludovic who did not feel at ease till they had safely driven out of sight of the château.

The next day when they were all sitting at luncheon with Uncle George, he remarked casually to the Countess :

"I see that little scamp of a Ludovic broke up your pampas grass pretty badly when he fell into it yesterday."

"It is badly broken, certainly—quite spoiled for this year and I'm much annoyed about it," she

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answered in a vexed voice, "but it was Gilbert who did it."

"Gilbert! Who told you it was Gilbert?" cried Uncle George sharply. "Why, with my own eyes I saw Ludovic de Morignac do it, and as for Gilbert he did all he could to stop him. I was taking my horse to the stable and saw the whole scene as plainly as I see you now, Aline."

"But Ludovic declared he hadn't done it; he said Gilbert —"

"And you believed him? Don't you know he's the biggest liar for miles around? I would never think of believing *that* little cad," interrupted her cousin.

"But Gilbert!" cried the Countess indignantly, "you said yourself you did it."

"No, bonne maman. I said it was broken. You punished me because I wouldn't say I broke it—you know."

"But why in the world didn't you say it was Ludovic?"

"I'm not a telltale," answered her grandson proudly, "and I wouldn't have said anything about it at all only Ludovic wanted to go and tell you poor Turc did it, and I was afraid he'd get a flogging and be chained up."

"So you let yourself be punished to save your friend Turc," said Uncle George with a smile. "Bravo, my little lad, you'll make a friend worth having when you grow up."

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"But, indeed, Eleanor," said the Countess fretfully, "I wish you wouldn't bring up your children with such exaggerated notions of honor. There I have punished Gilbert quite unjustly and before a whole host of friends too! It is very annoying,—very. As for Gilbert, though, I dare say he was glad enough to be free from Ludovic for the rest of the afternoon and I've no doubt he got a number of titbits to help out his bread and water. I saw several things at dessert disappear with mysterious swiftness from people's plates, but I said nothing."

Mezelle blushed guiltily. "I must admit Gilbert did get the offer of titbits from many sympathizers, for we all felt sure he was not the guilty one," she admitted. "But he would accept none of them, though he thanked us warmly and was, I know, touched and comforted by the sympathy of his brothers and sister. He said that it would be dishonorable to eat anything else when you had condemned him to bread and water, and that he wouldn't do behind your back what you wouldn't allow him to do before your face. Our boys are the souls of honor," she added proudly with a smile at Lady Artingdale.

"Right you are, Mlle. Lamotte, and we love them for it!" cried Uncle George warmly. "You deserve a compensation, my Bertie, and you shall have it. I am going to take the dog cart out this afternoon and go shooting. You may come with

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me and though you are not yet of age to carry a gun, I will initiate you in the delightful art of sport."

A look of distress came into the little fellow's face, his color came and went and for a minute he hesitated, then in a voice that trembled a little, he answered :

"Oh, I thank you so much, so much, Uncle George, for being so kind ! but—I'd rather not come with you. I'd just hate to see you kill the poor birdies and dear little rabbits and things. I'm so sorry !" and the child looked up into his uncle's face with his eyes swimming with tears.

"Oh ! never mind, Bertie, I was stupid to forget your Humane Society notions !" answered Uncle George with a laugh. "But what do your father and Uncle Christopher think of these newfangled ideas of yours ? To be sure, Arthur was never much of a sportsman, he was always the student, but your uncle Christopher is a keen sportsman if you like."

"My son Christopher never had brains or backbone enough to do anything better than shoot down some poor inoffensive creature or other," said the Countess bitterly.

"Do you mean to insinuate that all sportsmen are lacking in brains and backbone ?" asked her cousin, with a good-natured laugh.

"No, not *all*," answered the Countess smiling. "Many a good, clever fellow like yourself, George,

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is fond of a little sport as a pastime, but if you think over those of your acquaintance who make it the important and all engrossing occupation of their lives, you must admit that they are men with little heart, brain or real courage."

"Bravo! ma cousine," laughed Uncle George, "you are getting quite eloquent in the cause. I didn't know *you* belonged to the Society."

"No more I do nominally, but I love to have the singing birds about my place and I love animals of all kinds, and, in point of fact, I am in sympathy with the cause. Well! Bertie shall have his compensation in some way or other. I'll have to think it out—and in the meantime that little good-for-nothing Ludovic is not going to get off scot free. I'm going to write a letter to his father which will state matters pretty plainly, I can tell you, and all those who were here yesterday shall know the true facts of the case if it takes me the whole week to write the letters."

"Leave de Morignac to me," said her cousin. "I'll see him to-morrow and you know I can be pretty plain spoken when I like. De Morignac is not a bad fellow himself, only too indolent, and he has allowed his wife to spoil those children till they are perfectly unbearable. He knows it too and I'm sorry for him, poor fellow."

Monsieur de Morignac was certainly to be pitied the next day when he had the double mortification of receiving the indignant letter from the Countess

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and the blunt remarks of Uncle George, and Ludovic not only received a good whipping but was made to write an abject confession and apology to the Countess.

“Bonne maman” was determined to make up to her grandson for his unjust punishment and a week later she called him up to her room and set him perfectly wild with delight by giving him a beautiful kodak, a thing for which he had much longed. The Countess never did things by halves and the gift was a costly one, small, compact, with a magnificent lens, and was a ceaseless source of pleasure and interest to the child for many years.

CHAPTER VI

OFF TO ROME

THE first two weeks of their stay at Château d'Hautebrèche had passed and though fairly eventful in other ways, they were still more remarkable for the fact that none of the children had gotten into disgrace with "bonne maman" except for the mistake about the pampas grass. But this state of things was too good to last and one fine morning while they were playing in the upper park, Gilbert tossed the baseball too far and it went over the side of the cliff and bounded into a clump of the Countess' choicest chrysanthemums with such force that it broke down several of the most beautiful ones and entirely spoiled the look of the flower bed. The gardener was furious and his mistress scarcely less so, and she made many sharp remarks about the roughness of American games and the mistaken way in which her grandchildren were brought up, besides depriving Gilbert of dessert for the next four days.

That storm had barely blown over and "bonne maman" still felt very aggrieved about her chrysanthemums, when one day at lunch Gilbert noticed that Phil was looking about for salt, his grand-

mother, at whose right he was sitting, having inadvertently put the one that should have been near him on the other side of her plate. Gilbert was intensely fond of his elder brother for whom he was full of admiration and he was always very anxious to serve him in any possible way, so regardless of "manners," he seized the beautiful crystal salt-cellar beside him, stretched across Mezelle and handed it to Phil. Unfortunately, his grandmother, who had looked round just in time to see him, rebuked him sharply, and both Gilbert and Phil were so confused that between them they dropped the salt-cellar which crashed into the Countess' tumbler, shivering it to pieces and splashing not only the table-cloth but her own elegant toilette with great stains of wine and water. The scene which followed was a painful one, for "bonne maman" was beside herself with anger and fairly stormed at Gilbert, while Phil interposed taking all the blame on himself for having attracted his little brother's attention to his lack of salt and then having failed to take proper hold of the cellar. But the Countess was not to be pacified, maintaining that Gilbert's conduct had been unpardonable, that he had stretched across his governess' very face when there was no need to pass anything at *her* table where there were men servants to attend to everybody's wants. This was undeniable and Gilbert was sent away from table very hungry, terribly depressed and ashamed of himself.

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He certainly was an impulsive and rather clumsy little chap, in spite of his sterling qualities, and he was also intensely passionate, as might be expected of so nervous a temperament as his was. So one day he had been playing in the nursery with little Theo and they quarreled over some bricks with which they were each building a miniature castle. There were some ornamental ones that Gilbert particularly wanted for a tower, but Theo wanted them also and tried to snatch one from him. He resisted and the mite, who was used to getting her own way, sprang up and fairly threw herself on his arm to force him to give it up. Bertie was a strong little lad, just twice his sister's age and he shook her off so violently that she staggered and fell forward, striking her head against the sharp edge of an open cupboard door. In a minute he had caught her up in his arms, kissing her and trying to comfort her, but the nurse who was in the room rushed to the rescue and, scared at seeing a rising lump on her darling's forehead, pushed Bertie away angrily, picked Theo up in her arms and ran down with her to her mother, who was sitting with the Countess on the verandah.

This time, every one was fiercely indignant with Gilbert, who was so wretched with shame and sorrow at what he had done, that he had not a word to say for himself and stood looking like a convicted criminal while he watched his mother tie a large silver coin firmly on poor Theo's forehead so that

she looked, as the others afterwards declared, like a wounded hero from the war. Gilbert didn't often cry, he thought it babyish, but this time he fairly sobbed with remorse, humbly begging his "little Fairy," as he called her, to forgive him. She not only did so, but when his mother punished him severely, she cried and screamed throwing her arms around him and wailing that she wouldn't have her Bertie punished, he hadn't meant to hurt her, and so forth. So distressed was the little girl at her brother's disgrace that at last, to quiet her, they had to remit half his punishment, nor was Theo satisfied until both her mother and the Countess had kissed Gilbert and promised to forgive him.

The boy was no end sorry for what he had done, very tender and attentive to his little sister and very full of good resolutions not to give any one cause to reprove him for a long time to come. But alas ! a few days later while in the drawing-room, he rushed towards the window to see who was driving up and in his haste knocked against a small table covered with bric-à-brac and smashed a beautiful piece of antique Sevres china. And that same day, as ill luck would have it, Emil tore a hole in the cloth of the billiard table. Poor Lady Artingdale was growing quite nervous, dreading what would happen next and longing to be in her own home, where if the children *did* do any damage she would be the only one to take the consequences.

However, all the misfortunes and ill deeds seemed

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to have crowded together, the last week of their stay was a peaceful and happy one, and "bonne maman," who really loved them very dearly in spite of her sharp manner, was so kind to them that when the day of departure arrived they were all genuinely sorry to take leave of her and she wept bitterly at parting with them.

Lady Artingdale, Gilbert and Theo were also much grieved at going so far from Phil and Emil, who rather despondently started for England on the eve of the day the others left for Rome. The weather, which during most of their stay in Touraine had been really delightful, had now turned to rain and it was in a thorough downpour that the two boys drove off from the château, straining their eyes to the very last possible minute to catch a glimpse of their loved mother, as she stood on the château steps kissing her hand to them.

When the rest of the party started off the next day it was still raining and their journey to Paris, then through that city to the other depot, was a dreary one. It was evening when they arrived at the great Paris-Lyons-Mediterranean Station and discovered that there had been some mistake about the sleeping berths they had ordered and that none were available for them. Lady Artingdale insisted on seeing the station-master and when he heard she belonged to the English Embassy he had a special sleeping saloon added to the end of the train for her and her party. Chilled, depressed, tired, our travel-

ers were much relieved when, after waiting half an hour or so in the station, they were conducted to their private car, a delightful one, like a pleasant sitting-room with a number of disappearing beds in the walls, a private dressing-room, a special separate compartment for their servants and another for their luggage—a very desirable thing on a journey to Italy, for in the ordinary freight vans it is liable to be tampered with.

Little Theo had been very cheery and good all day and looked too sweet for words in a cunning little blue hood trimmed with swansdown, from which her dark curls peeped in the most bewitching way. Now, however, she was very tired and rather fretful and Lady Artingdale pulled down one of the beds and settled the mite into it after making her say her prayers. She looked no larger than a doll in it and was much amused at the novel experience. She insisted not only upon having her own doll with her, but having her in a special position which was apparently the only one supposed to suit that precious baby. Pleasant and commodious as was this private car, it had one great drawback, that of being the end one of a particularly long train, and it swayed and rocked about almost worse than any ship. This made them all stagger about in the most ridiculous way to the intense amusement of the two children who went off into peals of laughter over it. As to little Theo, they had had to tie her firmly to her bed with

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shawls and wraps for she seemed in danger of being tossed out of it like an india rubber ball.

While Lady Artingdale had been putting Theo to bed, Mlle. Lamotte had been helping Gilbert to settle himself for the night. The berth his mother had selected for him was near one of the doors of the coach which ought to have been securely fastened by a heavy metal bolt on the outside, as are all doors of French railway cars. A careless porter had evidently forgotten to secure this bolt after they got in, for just as Mezelle was stooping down to tuck Gilbert in, a lunge of the train made her stagger back against the door which flew open and with an agonized scream she half fell out, only just saving herself by clutching at a bar of metal on the outside of the car. She had managed to obtain a footing on the step, but the train rocked so violently she could not succeed in getting inside the car again and it seemed as if she must be shaken off into the dark night to be dashed to pieces or crushed to death under the wheels of the train. With a low cry of terror Lady Artingdale had rushed forward and, holding with one hand to the side of the door frame, she firmly grasped the governess by the arm. Gilbert had also sprung up to go to the rescue but his mother peremptorily ordered him to keep back, fearing the jolting of the train might throw him out. As for poor, wee Theo, tied down to her bed, she clasped her little hands while the tears ran down her face and she

cried piteously : " Oh, dear Jesus ! save my Mezelle ! save my Mezelle ! "

After what seemed to them hours of agonized struggle, Lady Artingdale managed to help the governess to get inside again and led her to a chair where she fell in a dead faint from the fright she had had. The children cried and screamed thinking she was dead, and Lady Artingdale vainly tried to calm them while she bathed poor Mlle. Lamotte's temples with eau de cologne, chafed her hands, and finally brought her " to " again. As soon as she became conscious, she was anxious to comfort and reassure them all, declaring she was not in any way hurt only she had had such a fright.

" Oh ! I shall never forget it," she added with a shudder. " I felt every minute as if I must fall down and I seemed to feel myself being crushed to atoms under those thundering wheels."

" You mustn't think of it, my poor Mezelle," said Lady Artingdale, tenderly embracing her. " We were all in anguish about you for a few minutes but God and Our Lady protected you."

" Yes," answered Mlle. Lamotte, " I heard dear little Theo praying for me and I think that gave me strength to make the final effort to get in."

Lady Artingdale insisted upon her swallowing a cordial and lying down for a time on the bed that she had prepared for Gilbert. In fact they were all so shaken by their fright that their knees seemed

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to be giving way under them and it wasn't until they had had a hot drink of herb tea, said to be very soothing for the nerves, that they began to calm down and think of settling themselves for the night. Before doing so they first ascertained that every door was securely fastened and bolted, then they all knelt around Theo's bed to thank God and Our Lady for Mezelle's almost miraculous escape. After Gilbert had once more been tucked in so that there was no fear of his being tossed out of his couch, the two ladies pulled down their own beds and lay down, but even after they had been comfortably settled in them it was hours before either of them could quiet their throbbing nerves and find rest in sleep.

Outside the rain came down in torrents and as they went south through a part of France where there had been heavy downfalls for several weeks, they could hear the wheels of the cars slushing through water and knew they must be traveling through flooded country. The car groaned and squeaked and rocked unmercifully, the rain beat against the window panes, and the night was so chilly that they were glad to pile all the shawls and wraps they had with them on top of the car blankets. At last, in spite of the noise and constant lurching they fell into the deep sleep of utter exhaustion and did not awaken until it was broad daylight the next morning. Mlle. Lamotte was the first to do so and she found it difficult to suppress

an exclamation of joy and admiration as she gazed out at the glorious scenery through which they were speeding. They had left the rain and floods and dreary skies behind them and were in the midst of Savoy, traveling at a high altitude within sight of the most glorious peaks of the Alps. Not only were they deeply snow-capped but all their cracks and crevices were outlined with the dazzling snow that set off the dark tints of the rocks and the woods all aglow with the brightest fall shades of yellow, red and russet brown. Here and there sparkled a mountain stream or waterfall and further on they would pass by fertile valleys, and picturesque villages nestling on the sides of the mountains, their houses or rather chalets just like those charming miniature ones one buys of the wood carvers in Switzerland. Cheerful looking peasants in their telling costumes were tending large flocks of sheep and goats and herds of cattle.

It seemed a shame to allow Lady Artingdale and the children to miss all this, but they were sleeping so peacefully that the governess hated to wake them. So leaning on her elbow, she lay still on her couch, drinking in all the beauty around her. The sun had but lately risen and the grand mountain peaks were too beautiful for words, standing out like great blocks of iridescent mother-of-pearl against the clear blue sky and still bathed with a rosy hue from the last gleams of the sun-

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rise. Mlle. Lamotte felt as if she must be in some beautiful happy dream and her only regret was that she could not share her intense pleasure with her companions.

CHAPTER VII

NEARING THE ETERNAL CITY

AFTER a time they stopped at the pretty little station of Chambery and the sound of merry voices, added to the cessation of the movement of the train, woke up the rest of the party. They all joined in Mezelle's enthusiasm and Theo clapped her hands with delight at the sight of the grand mountains and the "pretty sparkly snow." As for Gilbert, he was wild to get out and make some snowballs, so hastily helping him into his warm overcoat, Lady Artingdale allowed him to get down, telling him he might make *just one* snowball but must not throw it towards the train or the people in the depot. Then calling a charmingly pretty girl in dainty Swiss cap to their car, the ladies bought from her some delicious cream cheese, fine fresh milk, and tempting looking cake-like rolls, just hot out of the oven. When they had completed their purchases they began to call Gilbert, who in his excitement had wandered further than they had intended him to go and was busy tossing one snowball after another. He had just heard their anxious cries and was running back to the car when to their horror the whistle

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sounded and the train began to slowly puff out of the station. The terrified child ran with all his might but his long heavy coat felt like lead around his legs and it seemed as if he would never reach the train in time. Indeed, he could never have done so, had not a sturdy peasant caught him up in his arms, rushed to the already moving train and fairly hurled him into it, closing and bolting the door after him. Lady Artingdale leaned out to shout her thanks and throw a large silver coin in acknowledgment of the good fellow's helpfulness, then she turned round and said reproachfully to the child :

“ Oh, Gilbert ! how *could* you have been so disobedient when I told you to throw only just one snowball and then come back. I shall not dare to trust you another time ! ”

“ Oh, I’m *so* sorry, mama ! ” answered the little boy remorsefully. “ The snow was so grand, everything so bully that I forgot—I didn’t think ! Oh, please forgive me, mother dearest ! ” he added pleadingly.

“ Yes, please forgive Bertie boy, mother,” coaxed Theo.

“ Well, I suppose I must forgive you this time, Gilbert,” answered Lady Artingdale, “ but you gave me a great scare and I am much disappointed at finding you are so little to be trusted. There ! don’t look so miserable, though ; we must not let anything spoil the enjoyment of this perfectly

glorious morning," she added, kissing him. "I know you will try and be more thoughtful next time. Now let us kneel and say our morning prayers and then we will get ready for breakfast."

After prayers they had a wash and tidy up, two rather difficult operations on account of the rocking of the train which made the water splash about and caused them to stagger as if on shipboard. Then they opened their very elaborate luncheon basket, lighted a spirit lamp and, by dint of much patience and contriving, succeeded in making a pot of delicious coffee which together with their milk, cream cheese, perfectly delicious little cakes and plenty of fine fruit from their basket, made a most enjoyable meal which they ate leisurely, while gazing at the charming views all around them. All the way along they kept exclaiming: "Oh, look at the glorious view on this side!" "See the lights and shadows on those mountains! Did you ever see anything like the intense red of those trees and the deep blue of the mountains there!" They felt as if they had not eyes enough to take it all in at once, and longed to be able to look out of both sides of the car at the same time.

As they neared Italy the charmingly pretty villages were of quite another style of architecture, white Italian houses with flat roofs, very different from the Swiss chalets they had seen earlier. They arrived at Modane, the frontier town, over four hours late, owing to the flooded state of the

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country through which they had passed in the night. Lady Artingdale rather dreaded the ordeal there, for the Italian custom-house officials are most exacting, not to say disagreeable, and though all those belonging to one of the embassies are free from any custom duties and therefore spared from having their boxes opened and everything hauled over and examined, yet there are many formalities to be gone through and, besides the real officials, there are many so-called porters who are most willing, nay anxious, to disencumber you from your bags and valises for—evermore! I knew a gentleman who was going out to India via Italy and who, on getting on board ship in the Mediterranean, found that during their transit through Italy his trunks had been cleverly opened and not only every scrap of jewelry but every shirt and pair of socks he possessed had been stolen. As he had just purchased an outfit expected to last him for two or three years, the loss was a serious one, to say nothing of the inconvenience during his journey. The trunks had been so carefully relocked and restrapped, however, that he could not prove they had been broken open and had therefore no redress from the railway company.

Lady Artingdale knew of this danger, so all their trunks were carefully secured with great seals bearing the Sheendon coat of arms, but of course the bags, valises and baskets they had with them for the journey had not been so protected, besides which

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they could easily be carried off, so when she got out to interview the head custom-house officer and have her papers signed by him, she cautioned Gilbert and Mlle. Lamotte against allowing any one to touch their hand luggage, more particularly a small leather bag of her own in which she carried some valuable lace and jewelry. She had not been gone long and they were enjoying themselves, watching the strange, motley, cosmopolitan crowd shouting, expostulating, and rushing about in search of luggage, when what looked to them like two brigands with fierce black mustachios, opened the carriage door and began pointing to their hand-bags and discoursing loudly and peremptorily in most voluble Italian of which they hardly understood a word. Mlle. Lamotte tried to answer them, pointing to the further end of the station and explaining that the owner of the bags had gone to see the custom officer, but the men only shouted louder, gesticulated more, and finally made as if to take the things themselves and carry them away. Full of indignation, Gilbert fairly flung himself over the bags, covering them with his body and declaring that no one should touch them, while Mlle. Lamotte hung on to their valise and lunch basket and Theo clasped her doll to her breast evidently thinking they must wish to steal her also. The men were getting angry and beginning to storm at Gilbert and push him roughly away, when he exclaimed indignantly :

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"How dare you ! You've no right to touch anything of ours. We are ambassadors!"

The men stopped hesitatingly and Mezelle broke in with her few words of Italian : "Si, Inglese Ambassador," and in an instant the rough, insolent manner of the men changed to one of quite obsequious politeness ; they raised their caps and with profuse smiles and apologies bowed themselves away. They were *not* brigands, you see, but railway officials eager to make the stupid foreign passengers understand that they should carry their hand baggage to the custom house. Later on, other officials came, but our friends knew what to do now and the magic word *ambassador* sent them all away bowing and smiling, and after a time Lady Artingdale returned with a pompous official who put his O-K mark on each one of their trunks and smaller articles. This having been satisfactorily accomplished, he also bowed himself off, and Lady Artingdale called the maids out of their compartment and had them stay in the saloon carriage to mind the hand-bags while she took the children and their governess through the depot to stretch their limbs and have their first glimpse of Italian people and customs.

"Mother," exclaimed Gilbert, "what fearfully polite people the Italians are! Why do they put 'merci' (French for thank you) over all those doors ? For what do they thank us ?"

"Nothing," answered his mother, laughing.

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"‘*Merci*’ simply means ‘freight’ in Italian. Those are the freight rooms of the station.”

But there were other surprises in store for Gilbert.

“Why, mother!” he exclaimed again, “they have two clocks side by side and they give different times. What’s the good of two and why can’t they keep them on time? It’s awfully confusing, isn’t it?”

“Look above them, Gilbert, and you will see that it says, ‘French time’ and ‘Italian time.’ One is the correct Paris time, the other the Italian time, but don’t you notice anything else about the Italian clock?”

“Why, yes, mother. Isn’t it strange? It has ever so many more figures, goes up to twenty-four. Twenty-four o’clock, how funny! There’s an advertisement up there that says something about eighteen and a half o’clock; what would that be?”

“Well, they start at twelve o’clock at night and go straight on after twelve o’clock noon, so that our one o’clock is thirteen o’clock with them.”

“Then that means just plain half-past three. That would be heaps simpler than saying eighteen and a half or half-past eighteen, I think.”

“Oh, you’ll get used to it all right, but there’s the bell, so we must hurry back to our car and give the maids time to go back to theirs. Our train is so fearfully late that however much they try to

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make up they fear they'll never get to Turin in time for us to catch the train for Rome. It is supposed to start at half-past eleven and it is past nine already. We'll get pretty badly tossed about, I expect, for they will put on extra speed."

They certainly did get plenty of rocking and pitching about, but all along the way the scenery was so grand, so beautiful, so entirely different from anything they had ever seen before that the children and Mezelle were entirely given up to the delight of watching it, and only regretted that they couldn't look both ways at once. In spite of the hurry and tossing, they did not make up the time lost and when they arrived at Turin it was three o'clock. The train for Rome, after being held back as long as possible, had steamed away more than an hour before and they now had four hours to wait for the next train. It was one of Lady Artingdale's virtues always to make the best of everything, so she smilingly declared it would be far pleasanter to dine there than it would have been to take a meal on the jolting train. She took them all into the fine, spacious dining-room of the depot, where they partook of a delicious luncheon, which they enjoyed all the more for being able to drink without fear of spilling the liquid all over themselves or having it jerked up their nose or splashed into their eyes. They were by no means the only passengers to be annoyed by the delay, however, and one by one many other groups came

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to take their places at the small tables around the room.

"There is Prince C——," whispered Lady Artingdale to Mlle. Lamotte. "He is one of the most noted and influential noblemen of Rome, ranks almost as high as the royal family, is very wealthy and possesses pictures by old masters and other art treasures of simply priceless worth. His palaces, for he has two, are regal in splendor and perfect museums of beautiful things."

"He is a very handsome, stately looking man, isn't he?"

"Yes, and he is a fine fellow too. A learned man, a keen politician, a perfect gentleman and an uncompromising Catholic, never afraid of standing up for the Church and the Holy Father whose friend he is. But now, just watch what he is going to have for his dinner; it will amuse you."

"Why, Lady Artingdale, are you a thought reader? Surely you couldn't hear him give his order."

"No need of that," laughed Lady Artingdale. "I lived several months in Rome before, you must remember, and I know beforehand what his meal is bound to be."

The Prince had been rather meditatively eating olives and now looked up with satisfaction as the waiter came to him with a heaped up plateful of macaroni and tomato sauce.

"Well! he certainly has a hearty appetite, arist-

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crat though he is, if he can eat all that for the first course of his midday meal," exclaimed Mlle. Lamotte.

"He'll certainly eat all that and may ask for more."

"Impossible!"—but he *did*, then after finishing his second help, he tossed off a glass of red wine, paid and tipped the waiter, and went out to smoke a cigar.

"Is that going to be all his dinner?" asked Gilbert almost anxiously.

"Yes, that is most generally all his dinner, year in and year out, and his supper too. These Italians almost live on macaroni, be they the wealthiest prince or the poorest peasant. It is their national dish."

"What's the good of being a prince then?" asked Gilbert scornfully.

"My dear!" laughed his mother, "you must remember there *are* other things besides one's meals to be enjoyed in this world, though I must admit this chicken and these fried potatoes are simply delicious and I, for one, much prefer them to macaroni."

When they had finished eating, Lady Artingdale engaged an open carriage and leaving the maids in charge of the hand luggage, took the children and Mezelle for a drive all through Turin. It is a fine city but they were all much disappointed in finding it so much like a provincial French town. Still

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the "Corso," its finest street, is a magnificent one, very wide, and lined on either side with splendid old trees. It is about six thousand yards long and leads right through the city and over a grand bridge crossing the river Po. The view up this Corso is magnificent and the inhabitants are justly proud of it. After taking a general glance at the town, our friends were driven to the principal churches of Turin. The Cathedral is not very remarkable except for a domed chapel behind the high altar. It belongs to the royal family and they hear Mass there when they are in Turin. In the center of this circular chapel is an altar and beautiful reliquary containing a priceless relic, the holy winding sheet in which our Lord was buried. After kneeling down and praying fervently beside it, our travelers left the Cathedral, feeling strangely awed and moved by the thought this precious relic had brought to their minds.

"What was the first thing you prayed for while kneeling beside the holy winding sheet of our Lord, mama?" asked Gilbert as they drove off again.

Lady Artingdale blushed. "What makes you ask, Bertie?" she inquired.

"Well, I wanted to know if it was the same thing I asked for. I begged our Lord, oh, so hard, to grant us papa's conversion."

"So did I," said Mlle. Lamotte softly.

"So did I," cried little Theo. "I told the dear

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Jesus Theo wanted papa to love Our Lady ever so much."

Her mother kissed the sweet, eager baby face. "May God grant your prayers, dears," she murmured with tears in her eyes. "That was my intention also and we must persevere in praying for it till God grants it."

The rest of the time was spent in sightseeing, then after a slight supper they took the train for Rome and traveled again all night. When they woke up the next morning they were charmed to find themselves once more amid beautiful scenery, bathed in sunshine. To their right was a long stretch of waste land covered with yellow flowered shrubs and groups of tall rushes and beyond it was the sea, calm and sparkling, nearly as blue as the deep blue sky and with just a little edge of white foam where it lazily broke on the pebbly shore. To the left was a wild looking country covered with low shrubs and farther on, hills on which grazed herds of cattle here and there guarded by a picturesque group of peasants in quaint costume. As they neared Rome the sea, close by which they had been speeding so long, got further and further from them till at last they lost sight of it altogether, but the reeds and rushes became more and more numerous all around and very handsome they were, with their feathery brown heads of bloom.

Now all our friends began to look out eagerly for their first sight of Rome and at last a great city

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stood before them with its dome and steeples, and tall houses and oh ! those wonderful memories with which it is, as it were, perfumed.

“ Oh, mother ! ” cried little Theo joyfully, “ look at that great building there with people standing on the top of it and waving a welcome to us.”

Lady Artingdale laughed. “ That great building, darling, is the Basilica of San Giovanni, or St. John of Lateran and ranks as the first Church in the world, and those people you think are waving to you are the statues of many great saints.”

“ Are they ? ” exclaimed Gilbert. “ Well, they do look just as if they were welcoming us all right. It’s pretty fine to be coming to a place where saints welcome one, isn’t it, mother ? ”

“ Yes, dear, and I hope the saints will help us during our stay there,” answered his mother rather wistfully, for as they had neared their new home her heart had been sinking within her at the thought of all the difficulties she felt were likely to occur between her husband and children, and she was thankful to feel she could rely for help on God and His saints. And yet she little knew that a terrible sorrow and anxiety, one of the greatest crosses of her lifetime, was awaiting her there amid the sacred beauties of the Eternal City.

CHAPTER VIII

Two Cribs

THE Artingdales had now been in Rome over two months and in spite of the welcome the children had thought the saints had given them, life in their new home had not been, so far, altogether enjoyable. Many things had been against them. To begin with, the weather had broken up almost immediately after their arrival, it had rained almost constantly ever since, the children and their governess had caught cold upon cold and Lady Artingdale had been suffering from neuralgia.

Then Lord Artingdale did not find his position as first secretary in Rome half as enjoyable as had been many of his other posts in more distant lands. He took a dislike to Italy and Italians, looked on the dark side of everything and was gloomy, stern and exacting when at home. Fortunately he was at the embassy all day, except for an hour at noon, but he came home for good at about five o'clock, generally spent the whole evening at home, and insisted on having the children for a short time in his library, where they took their after dinner coffee and sat for an hour or so while he smoked a cigar. This library, as he called it, was a charming private

sitting-room, crammed full of beautiful things of all kinds which he had brought with him from different parts of the world and was consequently a most unsuitable place in which to have a children's hour, as even the best of children are restless and unwary in their movements.

In spite of everybody's honest efforts to do right, the situation between Gilbert and his father was still a strained and painful one. It was not that they did not love each other, but they were so totally different in character and ideas, and both so uncompromising and strong willed that they were perpetually misunderstanding one another. Then Gilbert constantly angered his father by his free and easy ways, his independence of character, his fearless display of his faith and his unfortunate awkwardness of manner. Lord Artingdale had shocked the child not a little by forbidding him to make the sign of the Cross when he said grace and reproving him for taking off his hat to every priest or nun he met, and the father, who had an Englishman's ideas of discipline, was very indignant when, on being told or forbidden by him to do such and such a thing, Gilbert calmly asked him, "Why, sir?" To Lord Artingdale this seemed insubordination and insolence, whereas Gilbert thought it the most natural question to ask, for his mother and grandparents, though gently insisting on obedience, had always made it a point to explain their reasons for wishing the children to do or not to do

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a thing. Then Gilbert's American slang simply drove his father wild.

So altogether things were not all happiness, though they *were* in beautiful Rome and *did* go about seeing lovely churches, palaces and parks, had numerous invitations to the houses of other diplomats and soon had quite a number of delightful friends and acquaintances. Even little Theo, child as she was and much petted by her father, was quite aware of the difficulties in the household and insisted on adding to her prayers: "Dear Jesus, *please* make my papa less 'disagreeabull' and teach him to love Our Lady," for Theo's childish mind argued that all her father's shortcomings were due to the fact that he didn't know and love our Holy Mother.

One evening, after a drearily dark, rainy day, they were all in the library and Lord Artingdale had so far condescended as to play with Theo who was more than usually restless, having been indoors all day. She ran round and round her father's chair while he pretended to try and catch her and fail to do so. Gilbert quietly sat on a stool reading a fairy tale and their mother looked on with a thankful smile to see them all so happy together, when all at once little Theo, who was dodging her father with merry peals of laughter, ran backward without looking where she was going and knocked down a rare piece of antique Chinese porcelain which was smashed to atoms. Lord Artingdale sprang up in

alarm and at the sight of the damage, he not only scolded little Theo severely but took her by the shoulders and shook her in his anger. The nervous child who had never experienced such rough handling before was simply terrified and ran to her mother shrieking for help. This angered her father all the more but the child was in such a wild state of fright and violent sobbing, that Lady Artingdale had to take her up to bed and after she had gone back to her husband, Mlle. Lamotte and the nurse were an hour or more before they could calm and reassure the little thing. Even when her parents came to look at her before going to bed themselves, they found her still sobbing in her sleep and twitching her hands nervously, while her baby face was swollen with the long crying and there were dark circles under her eyes. Lord Artingdale was too proud to own he had been over-hard on her, but in his heart of hearts he felt miserably remorseful and anxious, and he was bitterly punished when for several days afterwards Theo shrank tearfully away from him and utterly refused to make friends again. Little by little, however, by dint of presents and caresses he managed to regain her confidence to a certain extent, though she was not so fearless with him as she had been before.

It was only a week or two after this that Lady Artingdale had the misfortune to ask Gilbert to hand his father his cup of coffee. Delighted to be useful and anxious to please his parents, Gilbert

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carried the precious cup most carefully, never taking his eyes off it, but alas ! he caught his foot in one of the numerous and well-nigh priceless Turkey carpets with which the floor of the room was covered and fell heavily forward, spilling every drop of the coffee on one of the rarest and most valuable of the rugs ! His mother sprang up in dismay, little Theo shrieked with fear for her Bertie, Lord Artindale simply stormed with rage and finally Gilbert was sent up to bed in dire disgrace and with a heavy punishment for the next day, though Mlle. Lamotte declared that if they would only trust the precious rug to her at once she guaranteed to take every trace of stain out of it.

Poor Gilbert was broken-hearted for he felt that, try as he might, he could never keep out of disgrace with his father. His usual comforter, Mezelle, was down in the kitchen busy repairing the damage, but little Theo had insisted on following her brother to his room and her loving sympathy was very sweet to his aching heart.

“ Oh, Fairy ! ” he cried brokenly, “ do ask the good Jesus to make me less clumsy and stupid. I know it makes dear mother miserable and oh, dear ! I do try so hard not to be so awkward, but somehow my arms and legs seem to go where I don’t want them to.”

“ It wasn’t Bertie’s fault,” cried Theo hugging him, “ it was the stupid rug sticking up like that—but I’ll pray to Jesus very hard, Bertie, and ask

Him to please hurry to make father not so cross or send him right away somewhere," she added soothingly.

About an hour later, Mlle. Lamotte and Rocco, the man servant, entered the library flushed and worn out with their labors but triumphantly carrying the rug, which, though still damp, was free from the vestige of a stain.

"This is really wonderful!" exclaimed the diplomat much delighted. "I couldn't have believed such a thing possible. How did you do it, Mademoiselle?"

"With boiling water, hot irons and plenty of patience and elbow grease. Rocco and I have been hard at work at it for over an hour," answered the governess quietly.

"I really don't know how to thank you, for this rug is unique of its kind, a real marvel of workmanship and I would have been truly distressed to have it damaged. Rocco, I can easily reward and will certainly do so, but I cannot show you my appreciation of all the trouble you have taken, Mademoiselle."

"Oh, yes, Lord Artingdale," cried Mlle. Lamotte eagerly, "you can easily do so by forgiving poor Gilbert his punishment and saying a kind word to him before you go to bed to-night. The poor little fellow is broken-hearted, I know, and it really was not his fault this time, for he was doing his very utmost to carry the cup carefully and any grown

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person might have tripped over the rug just as he did."

Lord Artingdale looked vexed. He hated to own he had been hasty and yet he could hardly refuse the governess' request.

"Well," he answered at last, "I will forgive your favorite this time, Mademoiselle, but I will make him understand that it is only to reward you for your kind efforts on behalf of my rug. He must learn to be less clumsy and manage his feet better."

Still, though he had granted Mlle. Lamotte's request so unwillingly, Lord Artingdale went upstairs to the boy's room almost immediately and was astonished to find him, not asleep, but with his head buried in the bedclothes, sobbing bitterly. He laid his hand kindly on the child's shoulder and said cheerily :

"Here, Gilbert, my boy, don't cry. I've come up to tell you some good news. My fine rug is not spoiled after all, thanks to good Mlle. Lamotte."

"Isn't it? Oh, I'm *so* glad!" exclaimed the child, clapping his hands for joy. "I was so sorry, so sorry, but indeed, father, I didn't mean to be clumsy! I was trying ever so hard to be careful."

"I know you were and you mustn't fret about it any more," answered his father, patting his touzled head kindly and looking affectionately into the freckled, tear-stained face so appealing in its earnestness. "Mlle. Lamotte has asked me to forgive you

and therefore we will think no more about the matter and you shall not be punished to-morrow, Bertie. But do try in future to keep an eye on your feet! It is very trying to have such a clumsy little fellow as you are about the house and I feel sure with care you can cure yourself of your careless habits. Now go to sleep and remember you are forgiven and there is no great damage done after all, except that you gave your governess a lot of trouble. You must thank her for it."

"Oh, yes, father! I will indeed and I thank you ever so much for forgiving me and I will try hard and pray not to be so stupid," added poor Bertie humbly.

Mezelle came in later to kiss her boy good-night and though she was fagged out by her long and heavy cleaning job, she was more than rewarded by Gilbert's fervent gratitude and by the little fellow's joy at having had a kind word from Lord Artingdale. It was strange how deeply the child loved his father in spite of everything, and how intensely anxious he was to please him and win a word of affection or praise from him.

After this they had a breathing time of quiet and even pleasure. Christmas was approaching and there are many touching and delightful things to be seen and done in Rome at Christmastide. On the eve of the feast, Lady Artingdale and Mezelle were very busy in the nursery over some secret which seemed to necessitate many empty wooden

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boxes, lots of sand and much hammering and when at last, just before dressing time, they were allowed to go in and look, they found a most beautiful crib standing in one corner of the room. In quite a large rocky cave there was the manger with a sweet little Infant in it, stretching out His arms lovingly to them and around Him were His Holy Mother and St. Joseph, with the ox and donkey in the background. In the foreground quite a crowd of shepherds and peasants of all kinds were streaming up towards the manger with their presents. There were fishermen bringing fish, and peasant women bringing fowls, eggs and doves, shepherds with their sheep and others playing on musical instruments. All around the grotto there was quite a little landscape with graveled paths up which the people were going and little bushes that the sheep were preparing to nibble at.

These cribs are found in nearly every household in Rome and are more or less elaborate according to the means of their owners. The one Lady Artingdale had bought contained over a hundred little figures all different, all made of painted clay and quite prettily modeled, and the dear little woolly sheep and the fowls were all quite as well made in their way. Before the crib burned a whole row of lights in pretty little red lamps. The children were delighted and danced and clapped their hands with joy, so Lady Artingdale and Mlle. Lamotte felt quite rewarded for their

long labor in making the rocks out of brown paper and arranging the soil and greenery all around. After they had had a good look at all the figures and knelt in prayer before the crib, Gilbert and Theo were sent off to dress with the promise that they might light the little lamps themselves when they came to say their night prayers before going to bed.

On Christmas morning there was the joy of finding a whole host of delightful things in and around their shoes, then later on they went to the splendid Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore to see the procession in which are carried the rough planks that formed the real crib in which the sweet Infant Jesus was laid by His Mother. Little Theo was very disappointed for she had expected to see a neat pretty little crib like the one in their nursery and she felt quite distressed to think of the dear baby Jesus having such a rough bed to be in.

"Darling, you must make a sweet little crib for Him in your heart and ask Our Lady to put Him there," said her mother with a smile.

"How can I make a crib in my heart?" asked Theo anxiously.

"By loving the dear Jesus and trying to be very good in order to please Him," answered Lady Artingdale. "Every time you make an effort to be good it will be a beautiful new straw in your manger and every little act of kindness you do to others will also be a flower to put around His crib."

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"Isn't that lovely! I'll try to do little acts at once," cried Theo, looking around as if for an opportunity, then seizing a clothes-brush she began to vigorously scrub her brother's short trousers and stockinginged legs which had got splashed with mud.

"Gee whiz! Cut that out, Theo, you're hurting me like anything!" cried Gilbert, jumping away hastily.

"Did I?" exclaimed Theo with a look of disappointment. "I wanted to do you a kindness and have a little flower for my crib."

"It's all right, my Fairy," answered Bertie kissing her; "you can brush my clothes all you like, only not my legs. That brush is awfully prickly."

Lady Artingdale laughed, then said brightly:

"Do you know, I've thought of a lovely thing to do this afternoon. There is a convent near the Porta Pia (one of the gates of the city) where the good nuns care for a number of poor little homeless orphan children. Some of them are sick, crippled, half blind and all of them have been very, very poor. The kind Sisters take great care of them and they now have plenty to eat and a comfortable home but of course the Sisters cannot afford to buy them toys and Christmas presents. I wonder if my dear children would care to take them some of theirs and make their Christmas happier? You know that the dear Jesus told us that whatever we did for His poor He would consider as done for Himself, so it would be just like

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taking presents to the sweet baby Jesus in the Crib."

"Just as all those shepherds and poor people did on Christmas night, won't it be?" cried Theo.
"Oh, it's lovely, lovely, mama. When can we take them?"

"Well, in about half an hour. We will drive there because of the parcels we have to take, but I think it would be pleasant to walk home, it's such a lovely day."

"With you, mother dear? oh! that's bully," cried Bertie, who had felt rather sore at seeing so little of his mother of late. "Is Mezelle coming too?"

"Yes, kind Mezelle is coming. She has already prepared quite a parcel of things for the children, so run off both of you and see what you can find to give but let me see the things before you have them packed up."

When little Theo came back she was looking very serious and there was a downward curve about the corners of her mouth which showed she was half inclined to cry.

"I was thinking, mama—for the dear Jesus Himself—I thought—I ought to give Him one of the things I like best of all, oughtn't I? It would be horrid to give Him just old things or not very nice things.—So I brought Marguerite. Do you think He'll care for her? Perhaps not, as He's a little boy," she added with a ray of hope.

"One of the little sick girls will be very, very

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happy to have her, dear, I'm sure, and the sweet Jesus will be pleased to see how much my little girl loves Him," answered Lady Artingdale as she took the beautiful doll which was one of Theo's choicest ones. " You were quite right to choose one of your very best things for the child Jesus, dear. Now go and fetch me some of your old toys too and we'll make a lovely parcel of them."

Gilbert had not so many toys as Theo, still he was very generous with what he had and by three o'clock they all went down to the carriage laden with parcels. The great flight of marble steps was slippery and Theo was carefully picking her way down, not being able to see well over her parcels which she insisted on carrying, so kind Rocco caught her up in his arms, parcels and all and sitting her on his shoulder, proudly carried her to the carriage.

"The little Signorita is just as light as a feather," he remarked looking at her admiringly.

"Yes, that's why I call her my Fairy," put in Gilbert; "she's always dancing and skipping along."

As they neared the Convent, Theo's face became very sober and she sighed heavily once or twice, then at last she said to her mother: "I hope the little girl will be kind to Marguerite, don't you, mama?"

"I'm *quite* sure she will, dear, and when you see the poor little sick girl you will be glad you have been able to give her pleasure," answered her mother. "Her name is Leonora and she is a sweet

little child but she had an accident to her back and she may have to be still for over a year. Think how hard that must be for a little girl who would like to play and run about as my Theo does."

They soon arrived at the Convent and when they saw the joy of the poor children on receiving their presents they were more than repaid for any sacrifice they had made. The little sick girl lying so patiently on her back, looked with loving admiration at the beautiful doll when it was first shown to her, but when she understood it really was for her, she uttered a cry of rapture and clasped it to her breast, with such a look of radiant joy, that it brought tears to the ladies' eyes and Theodora fairly danced with delight. As they walked home, she exclaimed :

"It's been just the loveliest thing in all Christmas, hasn't it, Bertie? Don't you feel all happy inside you? I do. It's *so* lovely to have given things to the dear Jesus and the little girl was so pleased with Marguerite. She'd never seen such a beautiful doll before, the Sisters told me. I'm so happy. I'd like to dance all the way home! Will each toy be a straw or a flower for my crib, mama?"

"Yes, darling, some will be both straws and flowers, and the doll will be the biggest flower of all," answered her mother with a happy smile.

"The biggest!" exclaimed Theo, "then I think it must be a great big sunflower. I wonder if the dear Jesus likes sunflowers!"

CHAPTER IX

THE PEARL NECKLACE

THERE never had been a child with more wonderfully beautiful dark eyes than little Theo's, every one declared. Large, lustrous, soft, with long dark lashes and delicately penciled brows, they seemed to speak, they were so expressive, now loving and coaxing, now full of fun, now sad, and occasionally flashing with anger, for, like all sensitive, nervous children, Theo was passionate. But if Theo's eyes were a delight, by their beauty, they had always been rather an anxiety to her family for from a wee baby she had been subject to having what they thought to be a "cold in her eyes." They would become sore and painful and water constantly, and it was only after several days of careful bathing with a solution of boracic acid that they got well and bright as ever again. A day or two after Christmas they were worse than they'd ever been and in spite of all the care that was taken of them, they were still so sore and inflamed on the Feast of the Epiphany that the doctor declared the little girl ought not to leave the house.

This *was* a calamity, for the Epiphany is the children's *great* festival in Italy and there is on one of the biggest piazzas of the city a large and inter-

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esting fair, in which all manner of toys, candies, cakes, little figures for cribs, inexpensive curios and heaps of other interesting things are sold. They had been looking forward to this fair for weeks and poor wee Theo was so disappointed at not going there that Gilbert was ready to stay home also, rather than add to her distress. But Lady Artingdale would not hear of this and gently told Theo that she must be a brave little girl and refrain from crying, as it would make her eyes worse. She could win many straws and flowers for her crib by being cheerful over her disappointment and allowing Gilbert and Mezelle to go without her, to buy some pretty Italian toys for her. "Doctor Montefiore says 'if you are good and patient your eyes will be better in a day or two,' and I've received a lovely invitation for us all to go to the Rospiugliosi Palace to a great Christmas tree on next Wednesday, then on Friday we are to go to the Austrian Embassy to a fine children's party and on Saturday there will be another party for you at the American Embassy, so you see you have lots of pleasure in store."

"I always said it was jolly fine to be ambassadors, one gets so many invitations," exclaimed Gilbert. "Don't you love it, mother?"

"Yes," answered Lady Artingdale with a smile. "I think we have many and delightful friends here, but do remember we're *not* ambassadors, Gilbert, only belonging to an embassy."

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"I know, I know! Still, I like it. Do you think I'll ever be able to be a *real* ambassador, mother? I'd love to be one like Lord Merton and all the others."

"You'll have to wait a long time anyhow, Bertie," laughed his mother. "Yet no, you may be an ambassador of the King of kings right away if you are worthy of it."

"An ambassador of God! How, mother?" asked the child eagerly.

"What is an ambassador, Bertie? A man who represents his king in another country, who works for his interests, is proud of making him better known and more beloved. An ambassador flies the standard of his country over his home, he aims to win admiration and respect for it, and he is a messenger from his king to others. You can be all that for God, if you stand up bravely for your faith, give your whole heart to working for the glory of God, and by your prayers and example, and by words tactfully placed here and there, try to win souls to God and to make your King and Master better loved. That is the noblest way of all in which to be an ambassador, my Bertie, and I hope all my children will be ambassadors of that kind."

Gilbert looked very thoughtful and it was not until he and Mezelle had reached the Piazza Navona that the sight of all the bright, pretty, tempting things and the din of whistles and trumpets brought him out of his brown study. It certainly was an

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exhilarating sight, the fine large piazza, one of the largest in Rome, with its three beautiful fountains from which the splashing water fell like showers of diamonds in the brilliant sunshine. To one side of the piazza the grand Church of St. Agnes within the walls looked down as if in benediction on the merry crowd of children, peasants, grand ladies in beautiful toilettes, rough working men, monks in their brown or white robes, models in the now disused Roman costume, all wandering about among the booths of brightly colored articles with which the whole place was covered. Almost every man, woman or child was provided with a large, long, funnel-shaped horn or trumpet in which they blew unceasingly, making, I must say, the most horrible din that could be imagined. Still in the open air, under the bright blue sky, it sounded rather cheerful than otherwise, and Gilbert was of course eager to have one in his turn. Mezelle allowed him to try two or three before he selected a most dazzlingly brilliant one,—striped red and green—for himself and a smaller blue and white one for Theo. Then he also bought his little sister a beautiful set of wise men to add to their crib and a lovely star made by a little lamp shining through a transparency to put over it. For an hour or more they wandered about the fair, much amused at the cheery, noisy crowd, and eager to buy toys and little souvenirs to take home to the others.

“I wish I could think of something for father,”

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exclaimed Gilbert suddenly. "I've still got a lira (25 cents), but he doesn't care for candies or cakes, he hates pomegranates and of course he wouldn't like toys or little holy things."

"See here, Bertie," cried Mezelle, "here are some dear little paper-weights made of pieces of marble and alabaster. Perhaps you might get him one of these."

Gilbert was delighted at the idea but it seemed as if he never could make up his mind between the different paper-weights, they were all so pretty, he thought. At last he bought one of white and yellow onyx with which he was delighted. He could hardly wait for his father to come home he was so eager to give it to him and rushed downstairs to meet him as soon as he got out of his brougham.

"What *are* you doing here on the stairs, Gilbert?" asked Lord Artingdale sternly. "You'll break your neck one of these days if you rush down them in that foolish way. What is this? A bit of common onyx. Where did you pick it up?"

"It's a paper-weight, sir," said Gilbert, who in his disappointment felt a lump rising in his throat. "We went to the fair, mother gave me some money to spend and I wanted to get something for you—I thought—Mezelle thought it would be useful to you."

"Ah, yes, I see. But you shouldn't have spent your money on me, Gilbert, and I don't quite

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approve of your going to these fairs. One rubs against all manner of dirty, common people. Well ! thank you," he added stiffly. " Now, my son, run and get ready for luncheon and another time mind what I said about your rushing down these stairs like a whirlwind. Try and behave like a gentleman, not a cowboy."

Poor Gilbert ! All the joy of this beautiful festival day seemed to have gone from his heart and there was quite a sob in his voice as he said to Mlle. Lamotte :

" Father was cross because I ran down to meet him, and he said he didn't like our going to the fair and he didn't seem to care for the paper-weight, he said it was a piece of common onyx. I suppose we didn't choose it right, but I thought it was pretty, didn't you ? "

" I thought it was quite beautiful and I should just have loved to buy one like it myself, only I'd no money left," answered his governess. " But don't be disappointed, Bertie ; I feel sure your father was very pleased *really*, only you know gentlemen, specially English gentlemen like your father, often don't show what they feel."

" You think so ? You think he really liked it ? " asked Gilbert wistfully.

" I'm *sure* he did. Now, dear, mind you don't look gloomy at table else your father may be annoyed. Still you'd better not say anything more about the fair perhaps."

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Mlle. Lamotte was quite right, for not only had Lord Artingdale been much pleased at Gilbert's remembering him but he was conscious of having received the childish present ungraciously and was vexed with himself for having done so. He was anxious, therefore, to mention it during lunch in a way to show his appreciation yet, diplomat though he was, he did not seem to find an opportunity of doing so in a dignified way, until little Theo sitting on her high chair by her mother's side broke the ice by exclaiming:

"Papa, do you know Bertie brought me the most lovely Wise Men and a beautiful star and a trumpet and lots of things?"

"Did he? Why, Gilbert was quite a Santa Claus to-day, it seems, for he brought me a very nice paper-weight which will be very useful, I'm sure," answered Lord Artingdale, much relieved to have been able to say his gracious word and touched in spite of himself to see how the little boy's face lit up with pleasure. "What did he bring you, Eleanor?"

"He brought me a very prettily embroidered scapular. I needed a new one badly," added Lady Artingdale who had flushed slightly.

Her husband said nothing, but gave a sort of contemptuous laugh which made the two children look at him in shocked wonder and the meal continued in constrained silence. After a few minutes, the Viscount said harshly:

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"I don't advise you to wear those things Gilbert bought for you,—you can't tell what disease the person who made them may have had."

"I might think the same of every article of clothing I put on," answered his wife quietly.

"But they were not bought at a fair and of dirty Italian peasants."

"God only knows in what wretched tenements some of them may have been made," answered Lady Artingdale, "and besides, I have no fear about my beautiful scapulars. They will be blessed."

"That won't disinfect them, I suppose," sneered her husband.

"I am quite willing to trust to its doing so," answered Lady Artingdale, "and I shall treasure them doubly," she added with a smile at Gilbert, "firstly, because they are a present from my loving little son and secondly, because they came from the Epiphany fair in beautiful Rome."

Two days later little Theo's eyes were almost well and they were all in great excitement about the big Christmas tree party at the Rospigliosi Palace. Lady Artingdale, Mlle. Lamotte and Fortunade were almost as excited as the children themselves, for this was to be one of the most elegant and important affairs of the season, being a great charity fête in which all the aristocracy of Rome joined, so they were all very anxious that the children should look their very best and behave in an exemplary manner. The dressing of both children

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was a lengthy performance. Mlle. Lamotte took charge of Gilbert, while Lady Artingdale and Fortunade both worked eagerly over little Theo. Her beautiful dark hair was tied up with a big bow on the top of her head and her masses of dark curls allowed to fall about her neck and shoulders. She wore an exquisite dress of insertions and flounces of real valenciennes lace with short sleeves showing her dimpled arms. Her great broad moire sash, hair bow and dainty satin slippers were of pale blue and round her neck was a single string of precious pearls, a gift from "bonne maman" to her godchild. She might have just stepped out of a picture, she was so dainty, so smiling, so bewitchingly pretty.

"My! but ain't my Fairy a peach, just!" exclaimed Gilbert admiringly as he came in, also looking his best.

"You may think so but you shouldn't say it," said the nurse sententiously. "It wouldn't do to make Miss Theodora vain."

"Oh, no fear of that, is there, my Theo?" said Lady Artingdale. "She knows it was the good Jesus that made her, not her own self, and if He made her pretty, she has no reason to be proud of it."

Rocco now took possession of the little Signorita and carried her to the carriage. After a short drive they all found themselves going up the steps of the palace and were soon ushered into a great room where the charming hostess, the Princess

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Rospigliosi, received them most graciously and bade them go into another spacious room in which were hundreds of children and other guests, all in most elaborate toilettes, very eagerly watching a noted conjurer who was talking in Italian with the utmost rapidity, while he performed his tricks. Good places had been found for the two children and Mlle. Lamotte, but as they could not understand a word, they did not catch what he was supposed to be doing, and though he performed many wonderful tricks they were glad when this part of the program was over. After looking at the wonderful pictures on the walls they were all invited to pass into the pavilion or Casino, as it is called. This consists of three large rooms opening out upon the beautiful garden and filled with priceless works of art. Under the world famous picture of the Aurora painted on the ceiling of the middle room, stood an enormous Christmas tree laden with pretty presents which, amid much confusion, were finally distributed among the dense crowd of eager children, all pressing round it in their anxiety to get something they wanted. The crush was almost painful and the heat tremendous, though the great doors were wide open on to the beautiful gardens full of luxuriant tea roses, orange trees, palms and other semi-tropical trees and shrubs.

Several of the ladies had taken special notice of Theodora and the child, jammed in as she was by the crowd, had overheard two of them talking about

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her and hers in French, which they did not know she understood.

"Did you ever see so lovely a little child?" said one of the princesses. "She is as beautiful as a picture and no wonder with such a father and mother."

"Her mother is that perfectly lovely American over there, isn't she? But where is her father? I don't know him. Is he here to-day?"

"Yes, he is that handsome, tall dark man talking to the German Ambassador over there. Quite the handsomest man in the diplomatic circle and an aristocrat to his finger tips, but as cold and 'stand-offish' as you make them! I pity his sweet wife, though I expect he'll be Earl of Sheendon soon, for his father is not a young man, and owner of one of the finest estates in England. That may be some compensation to her, for I feel sure he must make her unhappy, he is so stern, and a bigoted Protestant too."

Here a sudden movement in the crowd liberated Theo, who having received a pretty doll, asked Mezelle if they couldn't get out into the garden as she was half frightened by the noise and vehemence of the other children. Their hostess caught sight of them as they were going towards the door and smilingly bade them go into another room for refreshments before they went away. They did so, and there found Lady Artingdale and Gilbert, from whom they had become separated and, after par-

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taking of delicious ice-creams and dainty cookies, they wandered out into the beautiful grounds and stopped there some time admiring the flowers and the magnificent view of the city they had from the upper part of the gardens before getting into their carriage again.

“ How strange it would seem to our English and French friends to see all these flowers and fruit, and feel this hot sunshine and have such a blue sky at Christmas time ! ” exclaimed Mlle. Lamotte.

“ Yes ! It reminds one of California, doesn’t it ? ” cried Gilbert, “ and oh, dear ! how I wish granddad and grandma were here, don’t you, mother ? ”

“ Yes, indeed ! and I must try and persuade them to come over this winter,” answered Lady Artingdale with rather a far-away look in her eyes and little Theo, who remembered the lady had pitied her mother and thought her unhappy, took her hand caressingly and looked into her face with a loving smile.

When they had driven about half-way home, Mlle. Lamotte gave an exclamation of alarm, crying :

“ Oh, Theo ! where are your pearls ? ” and to every one’s dismay it was found that the beautiful necklace was gone. In vain they searched all about the carriage and among their own cloaks and wraps. It was nowhere to be found and Lady Artingdale was greatly distressed, all the more so that she

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knew how vexed her husband would be at his mother's present having been lost.

"And in that fearful crowd there is every prospect of their having been trampled to pieces," exclaimed Lady Artingdale, "besides which, there were all sorts of people at that affair and many of these Italians are anything but honest. Oh! how I wish I had not let her wear them to-day, but they were such a pretty finish to her toilette!"

"Don't cry, Theo dear," cried Mlle. Lamotte, taking the child in her arms and comforting her, "for you'll make your eyes worse again and it wasn't your fault anyhow."

"Poor Fairy! No, she couldn't help it, could she?" cried Gilbert, "and besides we may find them again, mayn't we, mother? We might pray to St. Anthony."

"No, I'll ask the baby Jesus," said Theo brightening and brushing the tears from her eyes. "He is so dear and He loves little Theo. I'm sure He'll find them," she added gaily.

But her mother did not feel so confident, and as soon as she had driven the children and their governess home she told the coachman to take her back to the palace, where a thorough search was made in the grounds and also in all the rooms in which they had been. Those of the Casino were still so crowded, however, that although a public announcement was made of the loss and every one was anxious to help in the search for the pretty

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little girl's necklace, it seemed a hopeless task. Then, as Lady Artingdale had to hurry home for dinner, the Princess Rospigliosi, who was most kind and sympathetic, promised to have a more thorough investigation made as soon as the guests had all departed and to send a messenger to tell them whether or not it had been found. Poor Lady Artingdale went home feeling much depressed at having to tell her husband of their loss and as he had been detained by a colleague and only came in after dinner had been announced, she had to mention it before the children and servants. He was, as she had expected, greatly vexed and remarked sharply that it had been madness to let the child wear such a valuable jewel at a charity fête, specially among a motley crowd of Italians. The necklace had most likely been stolen and they would never see it again.

"Oh, yes, we will!" cried Theo. "I've asked Baby Jesus to find it for me."

"Baby Jesus!" exclaimed Lord Artingdale in a shocked voice. "Surely He does not trouble about such paltry matters!"

"Oh, yes He does!" answered the child confidently. "He loves little Theo and He listens to all I ask Him, so He'll send my necklace back again some day."

"Nonsense, child. God doesn't trouble about necklaces," said her father scornfully.

"Why shouldn't He?" asked Gilbert. "In last

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Sunday's Gospel it told how He changed water into wine, just because people had run short of it at a wedding. That was a miracle, wasn't it? And being short of wine isn't half so bad as losing Theo's beautiful pearls."

Lord Artingdale found this argument unanswerable. His youngest son he found annoyingly logical and clear minded. Not knowing what else to say he remarked sternly:

"No one asked your advice, Gilbert. Wait till you are spoken to before giving your opinion another time." And the rest of the meal was a very silent, uncomfortable one. After the children had gone to bed, Lord Artingdale spoke sharply to his wife, blaming her for teaching the child superstitious and, to his mind, almost blasphemous notions. Lady Artingdale gently answered that little Theo's perfect confidence in prayer had always seemed natural to her, that no one had taught it to her, but that she, for one, was certainly not going to attempt to destroy so beautiful a trust and one which made the child so happy.

Meanwhile Theo was being put to bed and Mlle. Lamotte heard her say her prayers which were more lengthy than usual and which rather amused the governess, though she was thankful the mother had not heard some parts of them. After her regular little prayers, Theo closed her eyes tightly and said earnestly:

"Dear little Jesus, thank you ever so much for

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making me so pretty and papa and mama too, and I wish you'd make my Bertie not so freckly so he can be pretty too, and please don't let papa make mama unhappy, and hurry to make him love Our Lady so he'll be less disagreeabull. And *do* please find my pretty necklace—to please your little Theo, dear little Jesus. Amen."

That evening Princess Rospigliosi's messenger arrived with a kind and very regretful letter from her, saying, that in spite of the most minute search, no trace of the missing pearls had been found but that they would continue to look for them the next day as she still hoped they might turn up in some unexpected place.

"Theo's petitions have not been answered so far, you see, and are not likely to be," said the Viscount sneeringly, "so I'll order the carriage and drive to the police station and newspaper offices and see about having posters and advertisements sent out. They are likely to be more useful than all your prayers."

CHAPTER X

THE CARNIVAL

DAYS passed and weeks too, yet no trace of the beautiful necklace was found, but meanwhile a great dread and heart-wringing anxiety had come upon them, which made such things as the loss of jewels seem indeed insignificant. Little Theodora's eyes, specially her left one, had been very troublesome of late and no amount of bathing and hot fomentations seemed to do them much good, so she had been taken to a noted oculist who frightened and hurt the poor little thing considerably by making a thorough examination of her eyes and then, though refusing to give any decided opinion about them, looked grave and said they would have to bring the child for treatments at least once a week. With these and bathing of the eyes three or four times a day he *hoped* to ward off anything serious.

Anything serious! The very possibility of such a calamity struck terror and despair in the hearts of her parents, and little Theo, who was too young to realize the fearful loss that was hanging over her, was only tearful and distressed at the idea of having to go again to what she called the "culist."

"She mustn't cry," exclaimed the oculist almost sternly. "You must avoid *that* at all costs and keep her cheerful and amused. That is also *most* important. Serenity of mind is one of the most needful factors of healing at all ages, so don't let her fret. Next time you come, Baby," he added more kindly, "I will show you a beautiful musical box I have with little dancing dolls on the top of it. Now, good-day ; think of the dollies, little one," he added as he ushered out the Artingdales to let in some of the numerous patients who had been waiting for hours to see the great man.

Lady Artingdale was miserably anxious, still, she found relief and hope in earnest prayer and determined to bathe her darling's eyes daily, not only with the doctor's prescription but with the miraculous water from Lourdes and every time she did so she made the little girl say : "Dear Mother Mary, please cure little Theo's eyes." After earnestly saying this little prayer, Theo almost always added with a smile : "Our Lady will make little Theo's eyes quite well, *some* day."

In order to keep her bright and amused as the doctor had advised, they took the child out to the parties to which they had been invited at the different embassies and in spite of her rather sore eyes, which spoiled the beauty of her sweet face, Theodore was much feted and petted and enjoyed herself thoroughly. Hers was a singularly bright, sunny nature and there was almost always a merry

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smile around her rosy lips, so that it was easy to carry out the doctor's injunctions to keep her cheerful and occupied. They now had little friends at nearly all the embassies, even that of Turkey and also among some of the titled Italian families, so they constantly went out to play with them or had them at their own house. Of course, Gilbert had to work a good part of the day, indeed he enjoyed doing so, for he was intelligent and studious and Mezelle was a painstaking, clever and altogether delightful teacher. Still, Lady Artingdale had the American ideas as to education and the boy was always allowed several hours a day in which he could either go out or have plenty of fun with his sister and little playmates.

The first few weeks of the year had passed rapidly and now Lent was approaching. Every one was preparing for the Carnival, which is a time of great excitement in Rome. That year there was to be a fine parade and the Artingdales were all invited to go and see it from the balcony of the Spanish Embassy, then stay to a regular party and feast of pancakes, apple fritters and other specialities of the Carnival time. It was a gloriously fine warm day and the children were immensely amused at seeing the numbers of people in costume, many of them masked, who were going about the streets, throwing confetti and long spirals of colored paper and thoroughly enjoying the fun of the thing. At the embassy they found a whole crowd of their small

friends, besides any number of grown-up people, almost the whole of the two diplomatic corps being there, besides Princes and Princesses by the dozen.

The Spanish Ambassador and his wife were very fond of Gilbert and Theo and were careful to seat them in the very best places in a front corner of the long balcony from whence they would have a grand view of the parade as it came up the Corso. There, as the ambassador laughingly observed, they would be the very first to catch the flowers, packets of candy and so forth, which would be tossed up from the floats as they passed. A rather big rough boy called Otto, the son of one of the German secretaries, had overheard the ambassador's remark and with a sneering laugh had pushed his way forward till he stood on the left of little Theo, Gilbert being on her right. The children did not much like this, for Otto was a lad most heartily disliked by all of their set, being rough, deceitful and a bully. Still of course they could make no objection, though Gilbert's eyes flashed slightly and he determined to defend his little sister hotly if Otto teased or worried her.

When, after a long wait, the parade began to file past, the children were delighted with it all—the floats, some very beautiful, some very funny, the knights and other historical personages on horseback, the pretty girls and children in charming costumes, the music, and laughter and fun. Many

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of the young society men were in the parade and took particular notice of the guests on the embassy balcony saluting them and tossing them any amount of flowers, bouquets and little bags and boxes of candy,—or for a catch—of dried beans. Sweet little Theodora, so eagerly looking over, and clapping her baby hands with glee, was specially noticed and all vied with one another in throwing her things, but here Otto interfered every time and, stretching forward, caught one after the other all the things intended for the child and pocketed them with a mocking laugh. At last poor Theo, constantly disappointed, began to cry, and Gilbert indignantly tried to push Otto away and catch at least one of the gifts, when the other seized him by the arm and pinched him most unmercifully, making him drop his packet of sweets into the street below.

Now it so happened that, though most of the guests were too intent on the parade to notice anything else, Lord Artingdale and the Austrian Ambassador were standing just at the back of the balcony, where they had a good view of the three children. From the first, the Viscount's attention had been arrested by Otto's behavior and though he was too polite to interrupt the ambassador, who was telling him of one of his diplomatic adventures when a young secretary, he could not help but show his uneasiness, and his companion following his glance, noticed the little scene among the children.

Quietly pushing his way through the crowd of spectators, the ambassador came up behind them just as Otto was pinching poor Gilbert who, red as a beet root, still held his own firmly, crying : " You shan't take all my Theo's things, you shan't ! "

" Shan't I, though ! Who's to prevent me ? not you," sneered Otto, catching another tempting looking little silken bag of dainty candies.

" No, but I will," said a stern voice behind him as, taking Otto by the coat collar, the ambassador looked at him with anger and contempt, adding : " Kindly give back to that little girl the things you have stolen from her, you great hulking coward."

" I—I caught them," blurted the boy angrily.

" Yes, I *saw* you. I've been watching you, my fine fellow, and your father will hear of your behavior, I can tell you. Now turn out your pockets, please, and give little Theo all—yes *all*, you shall not even keep what might have been your fair share. Good ; now go to the other end of the balcony and don't dare come near these children again. And mind, I'm watching you," he added as with an angry shake he released his grip of Otto and sent him off, then returned to Lord Artingdale, saying with a quiet smile :

" Excuse me, I knew you couldn't very well interfere, but I was quite at liberty to do so. That boy is a downright cad and I'm tired of seeing him torment the other children of our set. I'll tell his father a bit of my mind about it for it has to be

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stopped." Then dismissing the subject he returned to his previous conversation as if nothing had happened, though keeping a friendly eye on the Artingdale children, smiling every now and then at the sight of Theo's now perfect enjoyment of everything and Gilbert's chivalrous attention to her wishes.

But for that short time of annoyance from Otto, the afternoon had proved a most delightful one to the children and they were very sorry when their parents declared it was time to go home. There were two carriages waiting for them, the landau, in which Lady Artingdale and the children generally drove and Lord Artingdale's own brougham drawn by a very beautiful but restive black horse they called Mephisto. By some mistake the carriage which was to have taken home the Greek Ambassador's three little boys and governess had not arrived, and Lord Artingdale proposed that his wife and Theo should drive home with him, so that the two governesses and four boys could make use of the landau. The Greek Ambassador's residence was but a couple of blocks from their house, so it was a very simple matter to take their party home first.

"I'll be glad to come with you, Arthur, but I think Theo had better go with the other children. She will like it better and besides, I am always nervous with Mephisto, specially on a day like this," answered Lady Artingdale.

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"Nonsense, Eleanor," cried her husband in a vexed voice, "there is nothing to be afraid of. You may be sure I would not take Theo into danger. Here, give her to me."

So, much against her will, Lady Artingdale had to consent to the arrangement and they got into the brougham, placing little Theo on the seat between them. Just as they were turning out of the Corso, however, Mephisto caught sight of a dancing, grimacing clown, and seized with panic, suddenly began to rear and plunge, then in spite of the coachman's frantic efforts to control him, he ran away, tearing along like a cyclone through one of the busiest streets of Rome, sending the crowd of holiday makers flying off panic stricken in all directions. Unable to stop the animal, the coachman devoted all his efforts to endeavoring to guide him out of danger, while the helpless occupants of the carriage, tossed about hither and thither, waited in agonized suspense for what they felt must be the inevitable crash.

"Keep still! Don't get excited! It will be all right if you keep calm!" shouted Lord Artingdale, though beads of cold perspiration stood on his forehead as he thought of the possible result to his wife and child.

Lady Artingdale had clasped the terrified child in her arms endeavoring to cover the little one's head with her mantle, while her heart went up to God in pitiful supplication for mercy. And still the in-

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furiated animal dashed on down one street and up another. At last the coachman tried to turn into one of the streets going up a very long, steep hill which would, he thought, surely tire out the brute. But alas! the horse turned too short, one of the rear wheels caught against a lamp-post and with a terrific crash the carriage went over and the horse fell heavily to the ground, while the unfortunate coachman was flung from his seat into the middle of the road where he lay motionless and apparently dead.

In an instant the crowd which had been fleeing to the right and left closed around them and every effort was made to help the victims of the accident. At first, Mephisto began to kick and it was feared he would smash the carriage to pieces and kill those inside before they could be extricated from their perilous position, but a man from the crowd promptly sat on the horse's head and the animal immediately ceased every effort to move or rise. Then with some difficulty, the Artingdales were released from the broken vehicle, only to find that although not dangerously injured themselves, their darling little Theo lay motionless and limp, while the blood trickled slowly from a gash in her head and there was a dark livid mark from a blow just over her left eye. Lord Artingdale was almost frantic with anxiety, but the mother, though deadly pale, kept her composure and taking the child in her arms allowed herself to be led into a passing automobile

which rapidly drove them home. The still unconscious coachman was hurried to the hospital and the now quiet horse taken to the stables.

Ah! what a sad home-coming after their merry afternoon! Every one in the house was in a state of grief and consternation. Fortunade threw up her arms with wild cries of despair when she saw her darling lying, as she thought, dead in her mother's arms, and even good Rocco sobbed like a child at the sight of his little Signorita.

Doctors had been sent for in hot haste and arrived in an incredibly short time. Little Theo's dainty clothes, so much admired that afternoon, now all rumpled and stained with blood, had been hastily taken off and cast aside, and the poor child was lying on her little bed, white and still as death, while the doctors examined her anxiously. The parents stood by in breathless agonized dread, looking with pitiful appeal from the still form of their darling to the solemn faces of the doctors. If Lady Artingdale's breast was wrung with grief, it was nothing to the wild sorrow and remorse her husband felt. His Theo! His bright, merry, loving little darling! So full of life and happiness but a short hour ago! He seemed to see her again clapping her hands with joy and to hear her merry rippling laugh. But a short hour ago! And now—now, through his fault, his pride and stubbornness, she was—but—no! He could not, would not, even to himself, whisper that awful possibility of

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death ! And yet in his anguish he seemed to see it all before him, the life of perpetual sorrow and remorse, the sad face of the inconsolable mother and no little Theo about the house !

Lady Artingdale, still holding one of the tiny hands in hers, had fallen on her knees by the bedside and, white and tearless, looked on in mute despair at the physicians' apparently unsuccessful attempts to bring the child back to consciousness, while her lips moved in silent prayer. At last their own doctor, a kindly, elderly man, after consulting with his colleagues in a low voice, put his hand on the poor mother's shoulder and said gently :

"The child lives. We think there is no danger of *immediate* death, but that is all we can say for the present. We must leave the issue in God's hands and trust to His infinite mercy."

"She is *not* in danger ! Say she is not in danger !" panted Lord Artingdale, whose face was livid with anxiety.

"That I cannot say," answered the doctor sadly. "She is in *great* danger, but where there is life there is hope, specially with a child, and God may spare her to us yet, povera angela ! Though perhaps — Well, I repeat, we can but do our utmost and leave the issue to God."

CHAPTER XI

AMBASSADORS OF GOD

WHEN at last the doctors felt that they could do no more for little Theo but wait and see the result of their remedies, it occurred to them that it was very unlikely both parents had really escaped unhurt and they noticed for the first time that Lord Artingdale could not use his left arm, which he admitted was very painful.

"But it doesn't matter," he added wearily. "Nothing matters now, except little Theo. Save my child. Don't trouble about me."

"We've done all that is possible for her and now one of the most important things is intense quiet," answered Doctor Montefiore. "That arm of yours should be seen to at once, so come with me into the next room and we will have Doctor Ruspoli watch over little Theo and her mother."

The diplomat's arm was found to be only badly sprained, so it was swathed in hot fomentations and put into a sling; then the doctor tried to persuade his patient to rest, promising faithfully to call him if there was the slightest change in the child's condition. However, Lord Artingdale found it impossible to keep quiet, away from his little one and

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at last the kind doctor allowed him to lie down on a couch within sight of her, and under pretext of giving him a calming draught, administered a powerful narcotic, which sent the anxious father into a deep sleep until the next morning. When he awoke, much astonished to find he had slept and that it was now broad daylight, he found a trained nurse and Lady Artingdale sitting by the side of the little patient, who had neither moved nor spoken the whole night through, but still lay as if dead, her faint breathing being the only sign of life. The whole left side of her face was disfigured by a great bruise, which had blackened her eye and cheek and the wound of the head had been bound up with linen cloths which made her look still more ghastly.

So, as the weary hours passed by, they sat and watched her with aching hearts, hoping yet dreading to see some change in her. Two days passed and two long weary nights ! The father had been forced to go to the embassy, the ambassador being away for a week or so, but nothing had been able to induce Lady Artingdale to leave her child except for a few minutes, in which to try and comfort poor heart-broken little Gilbert, whose sorrow was pitiful to witness. His mother entreated him to be brave for her sake, and stopped him instantly when he exclaimed that the accident was his father's fault for not having listened to her when she wished Theo to go in the other carriage with them.

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"Your father is only too bitterly punished," she answered, "and besides, it is not for us to judge him, Bertie. He surely *thought* there was no danger but he was mistaken, that is all, and when you see him, dear, you must try to be very kind to him. Wretched as we all are, he is the most to be pitied because I know he thinks himself to blame for the accident, and then, he has not the comfort of prayer as we have. You must pray hard, Bertie dearest, not only for your little sister but for your father. Just go to the Sacred Heart, darling, and throw yourself into our Lord's loving arms and He, whose pity is infinite, will be able to comfort you far better than even mother can do. Then also beg Our Lady to intercede for us. You know what complete trust our dear little Theo has always had in her 'Mother Mary,' and we are using Lourdes water constantly for her, though you had perhaps better not tell your father that."

Gilbert felt much comforted by his mother's visit and still more so when he had cast all his sorrows into the Sacred Heart, as his mother had advised him to do. He was very remorseful for having been so angry with his father and determined to endeavor to help and console his stern parent as much as he could. Whenever they were together, therefore, the boy was full of little attentions towards him, offering to help him cut his meat and waiting on him with loving solicitude. Lord Artingdale felt quite astonished at the sudden

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change in the rather blunt, excitable little fellow and was really touched by his childish sympathy, though he did not appear to notice it.

On the second day, when Lord Artingdale had left his meal almost untouched and, after Mlle. Lamotte had gone up again to the little patient, he still sat looking despondently out into the garden, Gilbert sidled up to him, leaned against his shoulder and putting his small hand into his father's, said in a broken voice :

" We both feel awful bad, don't we ? But you mustn't fret so, father, indeed you mustn't, for we're all praying so hard that I feel sure God will cure our Theo. You see mother and Mezelle are so holy and they keep on praying all the time. So do I, but I'm not very good of course, and even Rocco and the chef have been praying. Rocco said he hadn't prayed so much in years as he has the last two days. He didn't think it was in him, he says, but he's so anxious about his little Signorita."

Lord Artingdale didn't answer for a minute but drew the little fellow on his knee, put his arm around him and finally said in a low voice :

" Yes, we must hope for the best, Bertie. Everything is being done that is possible to save our darling and if prayers can obtain her cure, I too feel sure your mother's will do so. You are bearing up against your sorrow very bravely, my boy, and you are very helpful to us all and I am proud of my little lad."

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After Gilbert had gone up to his governess, his father, as he slowly paced up and down the room, could not help dwelling on the child's confident faith and wishing that he too could find such comfort and hope in prayer. Even Rocco and the chef were praying and *he* felt as if he could not send up a simple petition for mercy and forgiveness, as if there was an abyss between God and him. Grace was beginning to knock at his heart, the message brought by those innocent little ambassadors was awakening a new longing in his soul, but he drove it away almost angrily. His pride, his ambition, his family prejudices, made him feel as if it would be impossible for him to become a Catholic. It would mean ruin, disgrace, the breaking from almost all his family and social connections. No! It was not to be thought of—and yet——!

On the morning of the fourth day, the nurse and mother noticed a slight change in their little patient and immediately sent for her father, Doctor Montefiore, Doctor Ruspoli, the children's specialist and Doctor Blanco, the oculist. Soon after they had all arrived, the little one began to move restlessly and moan slightly, then, little by little, she seemed to awaken as if from a long sleep and opened her eyes with a strange fixed stare. A look of fear came over the baby face and stretching out her hands she cried in a frightened, trembling voice:



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"Mama! Where are you? Theo can't see!
Oh, will it be always dark?"

"Ah!" groaned Doctor Blanco who was standing by the child's father, "*that* was what I feared!"

There was a low moan of anguish and a heavy thud which made Theo cling to Lady Artingdale with a cry of: "What is that? Is it Mephisto?" while the heart-broken mother soothed and cheered her darling, steadyng her voice to tell her that it was nothing, that she need not be afraid, and that they would have a light soon, but just now her eyes were too weak and tired for it, so she must be patient. Poor Lady Artingdale! her heart was wrung by a double sorrow and anxiety, for while she felt her most imperative duty was to soothe the child, she knew very well what the heavy thud was that had so scared her Theodora. As often happens, though the frail mother had bravely stood at the foot of the cross, the father, that fine, strong man who had always prided himself on his courage and self-control, had fallen under the stroke in a dead faint.

An hour later, Lord Artingdale was alone in his library, that room so full of associations with his little Theo. The doctors had positively refused to let him return to the sick room and the wretched father, alone with his intolerable grief, had been pacing up and down the room like a maniac. Blind! His Theo blind! His bright, merry darling, whose restless feet had barely seemed to

touch the ground as she jumped and skipped about, she be obliged to grope her way about for the rest of her life! Oh, that cry of hers, how it stabbed her wretched father to the heart: "Theo can't see! Oh, will it be always dark?" And it was his fault, he had brought this terrible sorrow on those he loved. Her mother! what must be her grief? She who so idolized the child. Oh, why could he not give all he had, even to his very life itself, to have that Carnival day back again and avoid this awful calamity! Then in his anguish he fell into a chair, buried his head on a little table close by, and sobbed long, heart-broken sobs while slow gathering tears burned his eyes without bringing relief to his utter misery.

Suddenly he was conscious of some one in the room and a loving voice murmured:

"Poor Arthur! Do not grieve so terribly; there is *some* hope," and his wife, slipping on her knee beside him, put her arms around his neck and drew his head upon her bosom soothing him as she would have done one of her children.

"Oh, Eleanor! you are an angel," he cried. "Never once have you said, 'It was your fault—if you'd only listened to me this would never have happened.' And yet it is the truth and you must have felt it! There is not one woman in a thousand who could have forgiven me as you forgive."

"Forgive you! Ah, yes, dear, more than that. My heart bleeds for you, because I know what you

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suffer and whatever happens, dear husband, we must bear our sorrow together, help each other to bear it bravely. But it is not so bad as we dreaded, dear Arthur. Our little darling begins to see a light now and the doctors hope her sight may return in time, at least partially, and they think her life is safe, so take comfort, dear, for God has been very merciful to us after all."

"Merciful! when the child may remain partially blind!" cried Lord Artingdale jumping up. "Ah, no! it is cruel, unjust! Why should *she* be punished, poor innocent little lamb, when it is I who sinned? Yes, it was my fault, all my fault. If Antonio dies, as they think he will, if our Theo is half blind, it will all lie at *my* door, for poor Antonio argued and expostulated with me about taking Mephisto out among that crowd of masks. He said the creature was sure to be scared, that it was tempting Providence, courting death, and I angrily silenced him. I insisted on his driving Mephisto because I was so proud of the creature's beauty and knew no one in Rome had so beautiful and valuable a horse as mine! Then I thoughtlessly spoke of taking you and the child in my carriage and when you objected, I was all the more determined to do so, because of my cursed pride and stubbornness. And then—then it was not I who was killed or injured for life, but two innocent victims, and one of them my baby Theo, sweet loving little Theo! Ah, it is unjust, and cruel!"

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"Arthur, you mustn't say such things," cried his wife firmly. " You are so wild with grief that you don't know what you say, but though God may send us sorrows it can be but in love and mercy. We cannot always understand, but we know His justice and mercy are infinite. Our faith is not the same but surely yours teaches you that! Oh, trust in God, dear Arthur! Do you know what little Theo said just a few minutes before I came down? There came a faint little smile on her face and she whispered to me: 'Our dear Mother Mary will cure little Theo's eyes—some day, won't she?' It is beautiful to see that child's faith. The doctors had tears in their eyes and afterwards told me that her happy trustful nature was one of the things they most relied on for curing her."

" Cannot I see her? " asked her father brokenly.

" Not yet. The doctors do not wish it, dear, but very soon, I hope, only you will have to try and be cheerful, you know."

" I thought I heard Gilbert's voice in there not long ago."

" Yes, Theo asked for him and though one of the servants had stupidly told him his little sister was blind and he could hardly see out of his own eyes for crying, he pulled himself together wonderfully when I explained to him the doctors wished him to go to her, if he could be calm and cheerful. He knelt down for a few minutes, then bathed his eyes and I was quite astonished to see with what self-

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control he smothered his grief at seeing his Fairy so altered, and managed to speak happily and be as bright as if nothing had happened. "Child as he is, *he* finds comfort and strength in prayer," she added wistfully.

Her husband did not answer, but he could not help feeling that there must be something good and great in a faith that gave such courage, such trust and such thoughtfulness for others, even to weak women and children. In spite of him, his heart was more and more touched. His elder boys had always been somewhat reticent with him, but Gilbert and Theo were perfectly open and appeared to utterly ignore the fact of his not being of their faith and the baby's perfect trust was quite a revelation to him. When at last he was allowed to go and see Theo that evening, he found her lying back among her pillows in a darkened room. She was very pale and weak, but had recovered her sight to a certain extent, the paralysis of the optic nerves they had so dreaded having proved to be only temporary. She recognized her father and gave him a faint little smile of welcome, then when she saw his arm in a sling a troubled look came into her face and she murmured anxiously:

"Is papa hurt? Theo is *so* sorry," though she uttered no complaint about her own injuries.

"That is nothing. I'm only grieved my Theo was hurt. Are you in pain, darling?"

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"Oh, it'll be better soon," answered the child evasively, then she added with a cheery little smile : "Mama says I look like a soldier from the war. Are you proud of your little soldier?"

"Ever so proud, my dearest, for she is the bravest little soldier papa ever saw."

"Please, sir, you must not make my patient talk," put in the nurse firmly. "Shut your eyes, 'Cara Mia,' and lie quite still. Your papa will sit beside you a while," and with perfect obedience, Theo closed her aching eyes and remained as still as if asleep, though every now and then she raised her eyelids to see if her father and mother were still by her side.

Slowly, very slowly, she began to mend, but for many weary days, almost two weeks in fact, she had to lie very still in a half darkened room, only being allowed to see one or two of her dear ones at a time and obliged, when not listening to some delightful story told by her mother, Mezelle or Gilbert, to amuse herself as best she could with her dolls and in a reclining position. But not once did she murmur or complain ; on the contrary her sunny cheerfulness never forsook her, and when asked about her sore eyes and wounded head her answer was always the same :

"Oh, they're better and our dear Mother Mary will cure them soon."

She certainly was slowly mending as to health, but though they had averted the immediate paral-

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ysis of the eyes, Doctor Blanco was very anxious and pessimistic about her left one, saying that the blow to it, coming as it did when it was already in a critical state, was likely to have done irreparable mischief. Lord Artingdale was nearly wild with grief and remorse when he thought of it, and at last Theo's patient trust in Our Lady's curing her began to irritate him. Surely, he thought, if the Blessed Virgin *had* the power they attributed to her, she *could* not have thus left the trustful baby prayer unanswered all this time. So one day when the child was repeating her assertion, he forgot himself so far as to answer sneeringly :

“ She is as likely to do so as the baby Jesus was to find your necklace.”

“ Oh, Arthur ! ” cried his wife reproachfully, but little Theo looked up into his face with her poor blurred eyes and said cheerily : “ He *will* find it *some* day and Our Lady *will* cure my eyes *some* day too, perhaps not till I’m a big girl. I ’spect it doesn’t seem so long to them in Heaven, does it ? or else they want little Theo to wait and get a lot of straws.”

“ Straws ? ” inquired her father in astonishment.

“ Yes, straws for a crib in my heart for the little Jesus. When I am good and don’t cry that is another straw for Him, you know.”

Lord Artingdale couldn’t quite understand, but the child’s patience and courage touched him beyond words and he hastily turned away and pre-

tended to look out of the window that she might not see that he, the proud, haughty statesman, had his eyes swimming with tears.

Sweet, patient, trustful Theo, baby as she was, yet she was certainly a loving Ambassador of God, little as she knew it, and if she was gathering a whole sheaf of straws for her crib, she was also helping to sow the first seeds of faith in her stern father's heart.

CHAPTER XII

THE VEILED VISITORS

STRANGELY enough, Theo had been the first one of the family to inquire about Mephisto, asking anxiously if he had been hurt. Wild and excitable as the horse was when driven, he was quite gentle in the stable and the children had been in the habit of going after lunch to feed him with apples, melon rinds and other titbits. He quite expected them and whinnied softly when he heard them coming, and Theo was very fond of him as indeed she was of all living creatures. So on the first day she was allowed to talk, she had asked her father about her dear Mephisto.

"He is on his way back to your grandfather in England," answered Lord Artingdale. "By the bye, Eleanor, I forgot to tell you about it in my anxiety about other things, but I had a most characteristic telegram from my father, either the day after our accident or the following one, I forget which. Ah, here it is in my pocket. I'll read it to you. 'Sorry you had an accident. Expect your wife won't let you drive Mephisto again. Kindly send him over to me. I want him for a riding horse. Will send you another. Sheendon.'

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Loving father and grandfather, isn't he? He doesn't inquire how badly any of us are hurt, though my telegram to him was anything but a reassuring one. He is only anxious to have the horse. My father used not to be like that, but Christopher is beginning to influence him."

"But do you think Mephisto will be safe as a riding horse?" inquired Lady Artingdale, anxious to change the subject.

"That's his lookout. I didn't offer him the brute, I was too glad to be rid of it without having to shoot it which was my first impulse."

"Oh, you wouldn't have shot poor Mephisto," cried Theo. "He couldn't help being frightened, could he?"

Lord Artingdale didn't answer, for his conscience told him he was the one to blame, not the poor scared horse.

The greatest sympathy had been shown to the Artingdales in their trouble. "Bonne maman" had hurried to Rome for a few days and only left again when all danger for the child's life was over and their various friends had been most assiduous in writing, calling to make inquiries and offers of help of any kind. Little Theo's room would have been a perfect garden of flowers had they allowed her to have so many around her and the fruit of all kinds that was sent would have amply supplied a dozen invalids. Her little friends were also anxious to come to see her and play with her, but

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that was not allowed for several weeks. In the meanwhile not only her parents, but Mezelle and Gilbert were perfectly ceaseless in their devotion to her and her gratitude was quite touching.

"Mezelle!" she would call sometimes when she heard the governess' step in the corridor.

"Yes, darling," her friend would answer, coming in to give the sweet face a loving kiss.

"Can't you come and *amouze* poor baby?" Theo would coax with her quaint Italian accent.

"I wish I could, darling, but it is just Gilbert's lesson time and you know papa wouldn't like it if Gilbert didn't do his lessons. As soon as ever I can leave him, I'll come."

"Yes, Theo will wait. That will be a little straw. Then Mezelle will tell Theo a lovely story and Gilbert will come too, won't he?" and the child waited in perfect patience till the lesson hour was over or till mother was free to come to her darling. Nurse was ever so kind, but she was no hand at playing with dolls and had but a few stories to tell, and Fortunade was so tearful she was rarely admitted. When Gilbert could go to his Fairy, he never failed to do so and was most ingenious in finding ways of amusing her, cutting out wondrous paper dolls, making things out of acorns or chestnuts and queer little figures and animals out of moist crumbs of bread. Then he was only second to Mezelle in the gift of story-telling, his giants were the biggest, most fearful that imagi-

nation could ever have conjured up, while his fairies were a constant source of joy to his little sister who laughed merrily over their pranks and tricks and was always eager for more about them. And so passed the first two weeks after Theo's accident.

Then the child's health began to mend rapidly. Slight and small for her age as she was, and as Rocco truly said, "light as a feather," she was a healthy, wiry little thing, and she was soon playing and frisking about the room as merrily as ever, but her poor eyes were so weak that she had to be kept in semi-darkened rooms and when she went out, wore great dark glasses which totally disfigured her sweet little face. At first she had been half ashamed to wear them, but the first time she put them on, Gilbert hugged her tenderly, saying she looked as dear as possible in them, and proud of her Bertie's approbation, the child was perfectly reconciled to wearing the spectacles.

Easter was now approaching—though it was a late one that year—and all but Lord Artingdale found intense comfort and happiness in the beautiful and touching ceremonies of Holy Week. One day that Lady Artingdale had been to a long service at St. Peter's, she came in rather late and was in great haste to dress for dinner, knowing that nothing vexed her husband more than having to wait for meals. To her no little annoyance, however, she was met at the door by Rocco who told her that a lady and little girl, both of whom seemed

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in great distress, had been waiting for her for nearly an hour and insisted that they *must* see her on important business if only for a minute. "They don't look like poor people, Signora," explained Rocco, "but they are in deep mourning and keep their crêpe veils down all the time. The poor little girl seems to have been crying ever since they came in. The Signor went in to speak to them but they said they must speak to the Signora alone."

With a feeling of vexation at being further delayed, Lady Artingdale hurried into her sitting-room, where she found a well-dressed ladylike woman, in the deepest mourning, who threw back her veil as soon as Lady Artingdale had closed the door behind her and dragged forward a pretty little dark-eyed Italian girl whose veil she also turned back showing a pale, frightened looking face and eyes swollen from long crying. The Viscountess' kind heart was touched with pity and putting out her hand to the mother she said gently :

"I am so sorry to have kept you waiting, but I was detained. What can I do for you?"

"Stella! tell the lady," cried the mother in a voice that trembled with emotion, and the little girl turned as white as a sheet and hurrying forward, fell on her knees before Lady Artingdale, crying piteously in Italian :

"O forgive! forgive me. Have mercy for the love of the Blessed Virgin. I am a wicked thief, but please, please do not send me to prison," and

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with tears still streaming down her face, she held up—the pearl necklace!

Lady Artingdale gave a cry of surprise and joy and taking it from her exclaimed :

“ My Theo’s beautiful necklace of pearls ! Where did you find it, child ? Do not cry. I will not punish you, I promise, only tell me all the truth about it.”

Then with torrents of tears, both mother and child began to tell the story, the little girl in short, sobbing sentences, the mother with passionate expressions of horror and despair. Lady Artingdale had some trouble in understanding them and vainly tried to persuade the excited Italian mother to let the child speak for herself. What she finally gathered from their tearful and incoherent accounts was this. The mother had taken her little girl to the Charity Fête at the Rospigliosi Palace—“ Oh, why did I ever do so ? Why didn’t I die sooner than have such disgrace brought upon me ? ” she cried wildly, wringing her hands while the tears streamed down her face. During the conjurer’s performance her daughter had sat behind the beautiful little Signorita and had much admired her ravishing toilette and more particularly her beautiful pearls and she had whispered to her mother how she would love to have such a necklace. “ And I told her it was ever so valuable, not a thing she could ever have. But though we are not wealthy enough to buy pearl necklaces, Signora, my family

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has always been one of the most honorable and honored in all Rome. Never, never has disgrace sullied our name till this unfortunate child committed the horrible crime!" added the mother with a fresh burst of hysterical sobs.

Then it appeared the little girl had followed Theo like her shadow, stricken with admiration as she was, both for her and her pearls and that at one time, when near the Christmas tree, Theo had dropped a toy and stooped to pick it up, and, under pretense of helping her, the little Italian had managed to unfasten the clasp of the necklace. Having found her toy, Theo moved away, quite unconscious that her unfastened pearls were slipping down from her neck and falling to the ground. In the bustle of that crowd it had been an easy thing for Stella to pick them up unnoticed and hide them in the bosom of her dress. Just at first she had been delighted to think of having the beautiful ornament, but after she got home she began to realize what a dreadful deed she had committed and her life ever since had been a misery to her, as she was haunted by a constant dread of being found out. Every time she heard a heavy step on the stairs she had thought it was the police coming to drag her off to prison, every time she thought any one noticed her on the street she had dreaded lest they were recognizing her for the little thief of the beautiful pearls. Time and again she had thought of throwing them away somewhere where they

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could not be found ; she had even carried them to the river and to a well two or three times, but at the last minute something seemed to hold her back.

“ And all the time that bad child never had the courage to confess her wickedness to me, Signora,” cried the weeping mother. “ She grew pale and restless and wouldn’t eat and I took her to one doctor after another, but nothing seemed to do her any good. I thought I was about to lose her as I had already done my other little daughter and, indeed, I don’t think it would have caused me such sorrow as this, Signora. Such disgrace ! disgraced by my own child ! I, who had always led such an honorable life. Oh, it is cruel ! cruel ! ”

Lady Artingdale, always so calm and composed herself, felt not a little embarrassed and hardly knew how to deal with this violently emotional Italian.

“ Do not distress yourself unnecessarily,” she said kindly. “ The little girl has confessed and restored the jewel, so the matter can end there.”

“ Confessed ! Yes, that is how it all came out. I said to her, ‘ It is nearing Easter time ; you must go to confession,’ and she would not go but cried and screamed. Then I knew she had done something very wicked and I took her to the priest and then he made her tell me. Ah, Signora, I thought I should have died. I have lost my husband, I have lost my other child, but I never thought to lose my reputation, my good name ! Ah, Signora,

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for the love of God and of His Mother, do not let this be made public, do not ask my name or that of my little girl, do not let any one know who stole the necklace or I and my child will be disgraced forever, pointed at in the street. Oh, have pity ! " she added flinging herself on her knees with a torrent of tears and holding up her hands imploringly towards Lady Artingdale.

" Oh, please, please ! do not do that ! please rise ! " cried the latter, seriously distressed as she caught hold of the hysterical woman's hands and raised her up. " Indeed, I promise that I shall never breathe a word that could bring the slightest suspicion on either of you. I would not dream of such a thing. You personally were in no way to blame and your little girl has been sufficiently punished by all she has gone through and will, I am sure, never wish to do such a thing again. I'm deeply grateful to you for bringing the necklace back and I know my little girl will be delighted to have her pearls once more."

" And you forgive her ? You will keep her great sin and disgrace a secret ? You promise it ? Oh ! Signora ! Signora, you are an angel !" cried the impulsive woman, seizing one of Lady Artingdale's hands and kissing it passionately. " Fall on your knees again, Stella, and thank the kind Signora for not sending you to languish in some dreadful prison," she added.

" Indeed, you had no need to fear such a thing,"

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answered the Viscountess, raising up the trembling child and kissing the white, tear-stained face. "I forgive you, poor child, and I am grateful to you, Signora, for bringing the necklace. My little girl would be most grateful too, did she but know. She has been ill —"

"Ah! you see, Stella," interrupted the mother, "the Signorita was ill with grief for losing her beautiful pearls and all through you, you wicked child."

"Ah, dear no! She would not have been ill over that," answered Lady Artingdale kindly, stroking the hand of the little girl who had again hung her head in shame. "She had a bad carriage accident on the Carnival day."

"Yes, I saw it in the papers and she might have died and you might never have been able to give her the jewels again," exclaimed the mother tragically.

"Thank God she is getting well and I hope your little girl will do so also very soon. You must not scold or punish her any more."

"Ah! but I've whipped her till my arms ached. I was almost insane to think of our disgrace."

"Oh, you shouldn't have done that. She had been punished enough. Now that I have granted you what you begged of me, I want you to grant me something too."

"Oh, anything, Signora! My very life if the Signora wishes."

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"All I wish is that you take this poor child to your arms and tell her you forgive her and that you promise me you will never reproach her with this again. Let this evil deed of hers be forgotten and let her begin a new and happy life once more at this glorious Easter time."

"Is that all? Ah, the Signora is good! Come to my heart, cara mia, cara mia! all that I have in the world! all that I love best on earth," and the emotional little woman half smothered the child with her tears and caresses.

It was with infinite relief that Lady Artingdale herself let out her visitors, once more deeply veiled, and went into the drawing-room where all were waiting more or less impatiently for her arrival.

"What in the world did those two veiled individuals want with you?" exclaimed the Viscount, who was pacing up and down the room irritably. "Had they come to invite you to the obsequies of their whole family? They were long enough about it. I felt quite anxious about you, for they made me quite creepy; they were so like funeral mutes."

"They were anything but mute, I can tell you," answered his wife with a laugh. "I feel quite exhausted by the tragically emotional scene I have been through. We Anglo-Saxons cannot understand such impassioned manners as these Italians have. I was worried too, to think I was keeping you waiting, Arthur, but I bring something which will, I feel sure, make up to you all for the delay,"

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and with a radiant smile she held up the pearl necklace.

"My necklace! my pretty pearls!" cried little Theo, clapping her hands joyfully and dancing about the room in her excitement. Then a soft light came into her brown eyes and going up to her father she cried triumphantly: "Oh, papa! didn't I tell you the dear baby Jesus loved me and that He would find my pearls for me? I *knew* He would! Isn't He dear! Sweet baby Jesus!"

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE LAND OF THE FREE

ASTER with its beautiful ceremonies and its message of hope and joy had come and gone, the month of April was nearing its end and the doctors declared that by the middle of May both Theo and her mother ought to be out of Rome with its danger of malaria. The Viscountess had been much shaken by all the sorrow and anxiety she had gone through; and though a fine, tall, stately woman, she was never very strong and would therefore, her physicians thought, be particularly liable to get the Roman fever. As to little Theo, she was as well and merry as ever again and her eyes were much stronger and could stand ordinary light pretty well. But, to their deep dismay, there was, on the left one a little white mark—a scar—her father persisted in telling himself it was, though every time Doctor Blanco saw it, he shook his head and looked grave. He had told them of a wonderfully clever American oculist, for the present residing in New York, and of another still more famous one in Paris, and as Lady Artingdale was intensely desirous to go over and visit her parents for a few months, it was

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finally decided she should do so and show Theo to the American oculist while staying in New York.

The children were perfectly wild with joy at the thought of being in America once more, and Lady Artingdale was no less delighted, though she was more careful not to show her eagerness. The fact was, that now the worst of their anxiety was over, Gilbert and his father were often at variance again. The Viscount was still worried about Theo's sight and constantly harassed by his fight against the grace of faith which kept knocking at the door of his heart and this made him particularly irritable, specially with his little son, so that he was constantly finding fault with everything the child did and it became a misery to the whole family. Theo resented it and was cold and distant with her father in consequence, which angered him all the more and their mother was so nervous with constant dread of a coming scene that the doctor became quite alarmed about her.

It was with little regret, therefore, that they parted from Lord Artingdale who had accompanied them down to the port and taken every means to ensure their perfect comfort during the journey. Though solicitous about every little detail, he seemed colder, sterner, more reserved than ever, and they little guessed what a storm of sorrow, anxiety and doubt was raging in his heart. He felt that they were all glad to leave him and knew that he deserved it. He longed to break down the

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wall of prejudices which stood between him and the perfect love of his dear ones and yet he told himself that it was impossible, that he could *never* believe as they did. And so he lived on in misery, outwardly impassible but torn this way and that by the terrible struggle going on in his heart. And now he would be all alone with his sorrows and anxieties ; for long months there would be no merry voices of children, no stamp of little feet, no sweet wife to greet him ever with a loving smile. How still and empty the house seemed when he returned to it ! He remembered with a pang how, only the day before, he had scolded Gilbert for coming too noisily down the stairs. Ah ! what would he not give to hear that sound again !

"As this is the month of May," Lady Artingdale had said to the children, "we will ask Our Lady to take charge of us during our journey and make it a prosperous one." And she certainly did, for they had glorious weather for their crossing, were not ill a single hour, had charming fellow passengers and spent a most enjoyable seven days on the beautiful ocean. But the most delightful part of it was when, on reaching port at New York, they saw a dear, well-known white-haired old couple waiting for them and joyfully waving a welcome to "the land of the free."

Dear, dear, what joyful bustle and confusion and laughter and happy tears and kissing and hugging there was when they first landed ! They all talked

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together and everybody wanted to hold everybody else's hand and the children felt in a perfect whirl of pleasurable excitement till at last they found themselves in granddad's beautiful new auto spinning along the busy streets of New York.

"Cricky ! all the houses and places seem to have grown taller and there seem to be hordes more people than when we were here before, don't there, mother ?" exclaimed Gilbert at the sight of the skyscrapers and the eager, bustling crowds, so different from what they had been seeing in Rome.

"Well, if the houses here have grown, so have you two children," exclaimed grandma, who felt as if she couldn't sufficiently feast her eyes with looking at them. "How tall Gilbert is for his age and even little Theo has grown considerably, though she is thinner than I care to see her."

"Well, no wonder after the long illness caused by her accident," answered her mother; "but she is wonderfully well considering, quite well in fact, but for that poor eye."

"Oh, it will be cured very soon," cried Theo consolingly. "Don't you trouble, grandma," she added as an anxious look came into the old lady's face.

"Dear old New York ! How delightful it is to be home once more," exclaimed Lady Artingdale rapturously.

"Home, Eleanor ?" asked her mother rather wistfully. "Ah, yes, we are delighted to have you home. But surely you have others —"

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"Oh, yes, yes, of course," answered the Viscountess, "I am blessed in having many homes, many *loved* homes; still the home of my childhood is, of all, the dearest."

"I am half sorry you are so charmed to be in New York again, Eleanor," said her father smiling, "for we had not intended staying here during your visit. Still, if it disappoints you, we can change our plans."

"Oh, dear no, Dad," exclaimed the Viscountess, "I am *sure* to love everything you thought of doing. I know you must have planned all in the most delightful way for us," she added, looking up into his face with a loving smile and just reveling in the idea of being looked after and cared for like a child again for the next two months or so. "I don't mean to fret or worry or plan anything, but to leave that all to you, Daddy dear, and give my poor overstrung nerves a thorough rest."

"That's right, Elly darling," said her mother brightly, "and we hope to send you back with roses in your cheeks and those anxious wrinkles all wiped out of your face. You're too young for wrinkles yet a while."

"Young! you forget I have a big son nearly fifteen," laughed Lady Artingdale.

"To be sure, and Emil is twelve now, isn't he? There is quite a gap between him and our Bertie there. How old is he?"

"Seven, going on eight," put in Gilbert eagerly.

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"And this wee maiden is nearly four, isn't she?" added grandma, tenderly kissing her. "Our last 'Gift of God' and one of the sweetest."

"You haven't told us what your plans are for us during our stay, Dad," broke in Lady Artingdale enthusiastically.

"Patience, patience, Elly," laughed Mr. Van Orton. "You will hear all about them when we get in. For the present you've quite enough to interest you looking at the old familiar places."

"And the dear familiar faces! Ah, yes! that's joy enough for one day; you're right there, Daddy, and I can't be too thankful to be with you both once more. It seems almost too good to be true. How many times I've gone down that street on my way to the Convent, and there's the dear old Church and ah! there's home! dear old, sweet old home once more!" and the Viscountess jumped out and ran up the steps feeling as gay and care-free as a child again.

"Now, Eleanor," said her father the next day, "I am going to tell you of my plans. I propose to stay here for another week so that we may take your child to the oculist and you can have the opportunity of seeing a few old friends. Then I'm going to take you all off to spend six weeks in the Yosemite Valley. You have never seen it, have you? and you ought to do so, for it is one of the most lovely spots on earth. How does my plan strike you?"

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"It is quite perfect, Dad. It's just like you to think of such a delightful treat for us. First of all, though, we must see about taking Theo to the oculist."

"Yes. Now, my dear girl, one of your chief duties at present is to do all you can to cure those shattered nerves of yours and I want you to trust Theo to your mother and me for that visit and not even to ask us what the doctor has said. I promise you everything humanly possible shall be done for the child, but I wish you to drive the thought of her eyes from your mind while you are with us. You will be all the stronger to cope with trouble later on, if it *should* come, but I most earnestly pray it won't. Will you consent to this?"

"I'm afraid my husband may think——"

"I will take upon myself to write to Arthur. He will understand that a doctor would sooner speak frankly to me than to the child's mother."

The New York oculist was one of those charmingly suave, evasive men, who talk a great deal to say nothing very definite. He went through a long process of examining the child's eyes, gave most elaborate details as to a complicated treatment of spraying and douching the eye, charged an enormous fee and was absolutely non-committal as to the probable results of his remedies, so that the grandparents were half disappointed and half relieved. There was a great deal to be done and the oculist had not said the case was hopeless or even

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dangerous, so on the whole they felt rather encouraged than otherwise. The rest of the week in New York therefore passed most delightfully, shopping, sightseeing, and visiting old friends.

"How good it seems to hear real American English," cried Gilbert enthusiastically. "Father was always scolding me for my American expressions, but I love them and I mean to grow up an American."

"Do you? I am so glad, Bertie," cried Mr. Van Orton with a beaming face. "Do you know, my dear child, I've always wished to leave my great business and my farms to *you*, for I know Phil and Emil will be well provided for and I should love to think of one of my grandchildren taking up my work and enjoying it. So much real good can be done when one takes an interest in the factory hands and, indeed, in all the workpeople whom one employs, and I, for one, cannot see that there is anything derogatory in honest business, though your father and his family may think so."

"I don't care what they think," cried Gilbert. "I'd love it and I'll be ever so proud to work with you and be a regular Yankee when I grow big, grandpa."

"So you shall, dear, if your parents will spare you, and old grandma and dad will be only too happy to have you, my lad. It will give us something to look forward to," added Mr. Van Orton with a glad look in his eyes.

They really worked quite hard during that week

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in New York for there were so many things and people to see, and they most thoroughly enjoyed the first few days of it, all but little Theo who was frightened and unstrung by the bustle in the streets and the rush and noise of the passing cars and automobiles. Crossing Broadway was agony to her, though she had acquired such self-control through her habit of suffering uncomplainingly, that she scarcely ever spoke of it and only clung nervously to some one's hand.

One day they had been shopping for a long time and Mr. Van Orton, noticing that Theo was beginning to look very tired, proposed to take her home and leave Gilbert and the ladies to finish their purchases. This was agreed upon, and Theo went out joyfully with her grandfather, of whom she was extremely fond. Almost as soon as they were out of the store, however, Mr. Van Orton started to cross the street, one of the very busiest in New York, and being quite used to city life he was in no way troubled at finding himself almost wedged in among the rushing autos and prancing horses. His practiced eye saw the necessary outlet coming and he was about to wait calmly for his opportunities when poor wee Theo, fairly frantic with fright, suddenly wrenched her hand out of his and with a shriek of terror, ran back towards the store they had just left. Again and again she had the most hairbreadth escapes from being run over and the people in the surrounding vehicles held

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their breath in agonized dread, expecting every instant to see her thrown down while poor Mr. Van Orton made frantic but vain attempts to catch up with her. As if by a miracle the child crossed un-hurt, and rushed into the store again in search of her mother, but found herself in another aisle. Still scared to death, she tore up and down one department after another till it occurred to her Lady Artingdale must have left the place and then she ran out of the store again, but through a door leading into a street at right angles to the one by which she had entered.

This street was almost as crowded a one as the other, and she ran along in the crowd, pale faced, tearful, half crazed with fear, looking everywhere for her mother, for Gilbert, for all those dear ones she seemed to have lost so completely. At last, she could stand it no longer and burst into tears and sobs, crying brokenly, "Mama! oh, where are you, mama?" until some kind ladies stopped to question and comfort her and finally a policeman came up to see what was the matter, but found her answers highly bewildering.

"Where do your father and mother live, little Missy?" he inquired kindly.

"In R-r-roma," answered the sobbing Theo, pronouncing the name of the city as Romans do, with a tremendous R at the beginning.

"In rooms? But where, dear? What street or hotel are they in?"

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"Via Castel—fi—dardo ——" panted the child.

"Ain't no such place 'ere as I knows of," muttered the policeman referring to his book. "Don't you know no other address, little Missy?"

"Granddad—we were—with granddad—I ran away 'cause I was frightened."

"Ah! and where does granddad live?"

"Out in America," answered Theo as if she were giving a vast amount of information.

"In America! Ain't you been here long then?"

"No, we only came a few days ago. Granddad lives in a great big house, in a great big street, and oh! I want mama," sobbed Theo, while the puzzled policeman scratched his head in perplexity.

"What's your name, anyhow?"

"Theodora, but they generally call me Theo."

"Ain't you got no other name?"

"Yes"—with a fresh sob, "Bertie—he calls me Fairy."

"Hang it all! But ain't your mother got a name?" blurted the policeman at last.

"Yes, people call her Lady Artingdale."

"Artingdale, Lady Artingdale.—Well, I'll look it up. Here, come with me and don't you cry, little Miss; we'll find your mother all right," and he took the trembling Theo's hand to lead her to the police station, but as she shrank back terrified when he wanted to cross the street, he caught her up in his arms and sat her on his shoulder where, as he was

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a great tall man, she could be seen well above the crowd.

Meanwhile poor Mr. Van Orton had rushed back into the store hatless, disheveled, wildly inquiring for Theo.

"Theo!" cried her mother springing up. "Why, you took her away with you!"

"Yes, but she got scared in the street and ran away from me. I did my utmost to catch her but the autos kept rushing between us. I thought—she'd get killed! but thank God, she got over safely. I was told she was seen running back in here."

"We haven't seen her," cried the ladies and Gilbert in alarm, and immediately they all began an anxious search for her all over the store. They heard a little girl had been seen running this way and that and finally discovered she had been noticed going out into the other street where they followed, frantically searching and inquiring for her.

At last, after what seemed to them hours of agonized suspense, Gilbert gave a cry of triumph and pointed to little Theo sitting on the shoulder of the tall policeman, who was threading his way through the crowded thoroughfare. Utterly oblivious of all danger, the boy dashed out into the street after them, rushing in front of autos and horses, waving and crying wildly: "Hey there! that's our Theo, that's my Fairy. Stop, stop!" But the din and roar of the traffic drowned the child's voice and again the onlookers held their

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breath, expecting to see a tragedy while poor Lady Artingdale fell back fainting in her father's arms. But Gilbert got over safely, caught up with the policeman and was soon clasping and hugging little Theo in his arms. A few minutes later they were all standing round the Viscountess, who had been carried into a near-by drug store while Gilbert and Theo sobbed despairingly, thinking she was dead. She soon came to again, apologized humbly for all the trouble she had given and clasped her children to her breast with tears of joy and thankfulness.

"Oh, Theo! you naughty little girl," cried Mr. Van Orton reproachfully. "See what anxiety and sorrow you caused us by running away as you did."

"I didn't mean to run away," sobbed Theo. "I was so frightened—I wanted to come back to mama and—I couldn't find her."

"Here, darling, don't cry any more," murmured her mother soothingly. "I'm sure granddad will forgive you for he knows you have not been used to these busy American cities."

Of course granddad forgave the poor, trembling mite and soothed and petted her, still he was very careful never to take her across a busy thoroughfare again unless her mother was with her, for he had had one of the biggest scares of his life.

CHAPTER XIV

ALL AMONG THE WATERFALLS

THE journey to Yosemite was a rather long, though very comfortable one, and they all enjoyed every bit of the way, there was so much to see and to plan and to talk about. They stopped to spend two whole days in San Francisco and were charmed with the beautiful bay and the fine city so rapidly built up again after its last terrible disaster. Then they went on to El Portal, where they spent a night in the large and pleasant hotel surrounded by beautiful views of rushing river and wooded hills. The next morning, quite early, they were up and ready to take the stage which was to drive them all along the banks of the Merced to Camp Curry. Mr. Van Orton had chosen that particular camp, first, because he preferred its situation to that of any other and secondly, because although perfectly comfortable and patronized by many very delightful people, it is not considered so fashionable as Camp Awahnee or the Sentinel Hotel. Mr. Van Orton especially wished his daughter and grandchildren to feel perfectly free and at their ease, and he knew they would do that nowhere better than in Camp Curry, besides which he had a third at-

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traction there, the close proximity of the Le Conte Memorial Lodge, the headquarters of the Sierra Club, to which he belonged. This building contains a delightful library of books about Yosemite and the High Sierras, good collections of pressed flowers and ferns, much literature concerning the birds, animals, trees and flora of the valley, besides a number of maps and interesting information of all kinds.

Hardly had they left El Portal and passed through the gates into the Yosemite park when their driver pointed with his whip to the loose sandy soil of the road and made them notice the footprints of a good sized bear.

"Oh, gee! are there bears here? and are they fierce?" cried Gilbert, whose eyes sparkled at the thought of exciting adventures.

"Oh, yes, there are a good number of bears in the valley, but they very seldom attack anybody. About the only thing they do is sneak up to the outskirts of the camps at night and feed out of the garbage cans. Still, it is best not to stroll out by moonlight alone, or you might get hugged by one."

"Do they hug you?" cried little Theo. "Gilbert hugs me sometimes when he's *very* affectionate. Are the bears affectionate?"

"Bet you they are! They're so loving they wish to eat you!" laughed Gilbert.

"Oh, I don't think they would really eat a person though they might hug and kill him if he had

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attacked them in some way," put in his grandfather.

"Well, but they eat the garbage," argued Gilbert.

"I don't think that's the slightest proof of their eating men," laughed Mr. Van Orton. "I know I am but dust, but I totally refuse to admit that I am garbage!"

"Of course not, granddad," and Gilbert laughed merrily. "I was only thinking there was meat in the garbage."

"Perhaps. Still, I think these are vegetarian bears. I should just love to see one close enough to snap-shot it," added Mr. Van Orton, who was an enthusiastic photographer. "But isn't this scenery getting perfectly grand? Look at that immense block of granite, that is the whole side of a mountain. Do you see how well it represents an elephant?"

"Yes, and here are the Cascade Falls and there ahead of us the Ribbon Falls, one of the very highest though not so fine as many of the others," said their conductor pointing to the left.

At every step of the way there was something new and entrancingly beautiful to see, now a grand and lofty mountain, now a wonderful waterfall splashing down two or three thousand feet and sparkling like diamonds and precious stones in the brilliant sunshine. Then again they came to exquisite bits of river scenery, the rushing waters of

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the Merced leaping and dashing over great boulders of richly colored granite, while great trees of all kinds lined its banks and hung their long branches over it and dense bushes of snowy white azaleas mirrored their thousands of blossoms in the rippling waters. The scenery was ever varied, ever beautiful, increasing in grandeur and impressiveness as they went along, till they came to that most glorious part of the valley which has to the left the stupendously grand, massive buttress of El Capitan,—a solid mass of rosy cream-colored granite rising in one unbroken mass for thirty-three hundred feet above the level of the valley. This magnificent, awe-inspiring mountain, juts out in a sharp angle and has two immense faces each more than half a mile in breadth. The soft toned granite is as shiny as if it had been polished and so tremendous is this perpendicular cliff that a great pine tree seventy-nine feet high which is half-way up has to be pointed out to one, and looks no larger than a pot *plant*. It might be a fern growing out of the rock!

To the right of the valley are the wondrously beautiful Bridal Veils Falls. The waters of this glorious cascade, after dashing down nine hundred feet, fall in front of a dark, deep cavern surrounded with ferns and leap up again in clouds of spray that almost reach the top of the mountain again.

“The Indians have a superstitious terror of this beautiful fall,” said Mr. Van Orton, “and never pass by it if they can avoid doing so. They say

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that the spirit of the evil wind, Pohono, dwells in it and tries to lure the unwary to death in its treacherous waters."

"How strange that any one should associate the idea of evil and death with anything so exquisitely beautiful," exclaimed Lady Artingdale.

"Still, it does make a tremendous roaring and I have no doubt that any one venturing too near might get into danger," answered her mother.

"I think the roaring just fine," cried Gilbert. "It makes me think of grand, rather scaring music, don't you think? But, granddad, are there still Indians about here? Do they scalp people?" he added eagerly, for he had been reading all the stories by Fenimore Cooper of late and found them thrillingly interesting.

"No, you need have no fear for your curly pate," laughed Mr. Van Orton; "there are still a few Indians here, I believe, but they are very peaceable people. I am sorry to say the Indians have been so oppressed by the whites that there is little spirit left in most of them."

"They have a small camp over there," said the driver pointing to the other side of the river, "and you can visit it at any time."

"Oh, golly! I'd love to visit an Indian camp and see the wigwams," exclaimed Gilbert eagerly.

And the next day he left his grandfather no peace till he had taken him over there, but his disappointment was intense at finding only some very

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dirty shanties in which were a few fat squaws, while round about the camp stood two or three rather sullen looking men and a few children quite decently dressed just like any other school children, the girl even having very elaborate bows on her hair.

"Are those Indians?" asked the boy in disgust. "Why, they have no feathers on their heads and their clothes are just like other people's, only ragged and dirty and they are not even red! I don't believe they're Indians at all. They're not one bit like pictures of Red Indians in my books!"

"No, these are the Digger Indians, one of the lowest and least intelligent tribes. The different tribes differ very much from one another both in appearance and capabilities, as you will notice when you see more of them. But look at that white-haired old squaw sitting there pounding acorns. She does not know her own age—these Indians never do—but I have been told that, according to computations made by white residents, she is at least one hundred and twenty years old. That other old squaw beside her is her daughter."

The two old women grinned good-naturedly at their visitors, but did not rise from the floor where they were squatting as they laboriously pounded away at the acorns, with which they make a sort of flour which is their staple food.

A few days later as our party were wandering

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about in the glorious woods on the mountainside they met two ladies running down the trail towards them and gesticulating wildly.

"What's the matter?" shouted Mr. Van Orton.

"Run — run — there's — a great — big — bear," panted the ladies rushing past them down the mountain path.

"Where? where?" asked Mr. Van Orton eagerly.

"On the left, there in the woods. We—saw it," gasped the fleeing women.

"What a good thing we've all got our kodaks and I have my good camera," cried Mr. Van Orton. "Come quick, I *must* get a photo of him."

"But won't it be dangerous—out here in the woods?" asked his wife rather timidly.

"Dangerous? No! He'll be more scared than we are. Come quietly," he added in a low voice, "and have your kodaks all ready to snap. But don't put them to any great speed. Bears are slow going animals. I mean to take him with my tripod camera if I can. You hold my kodak, little Theo, in case I need it."

"Oh, I'll hold it," cried Mrs. Van Orton. "Theo has her own kodak and I know she will like to try to photograph him herself."

"Now," said the old gentleman as they hurried along, "for goodness' sake don't make me miss my bear photo and whatever you do, don't scream and don't run."

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Hurrying up the steep trail they had reached the spot the ladies had pointed to, but to their disappointment they saw no sign of any bear.

"They must have seen some rock or a dog or something," said Gilbert scornfully, when just then little Theo, whose ears were particularly sharp, exclaimed :

"Don't you hear something? I hear something treading," and sure enough in a few minutes they could all hear the sound of crackling branches and a heavy footfall and soon to their great joy they saw Bruin himself coming towards them. Mrs. Van Orton gave a faint shriek, dropped the kodak, and fled down the trail, but the others stood their ground, the old gentleman and children too anxious for a snap-shot to think of danger, and Lady Artingdale determined to watch over her dear ones. When the bear caught sight of them all standing there, aiming their kodaks at him, he looked surprised and rather disgusted and turned as if to go away. Gilbert was for running after him but was peremptorily stopped by his grandfather. For a few minutes they waited in breathless suspense, then Bruin turned back again and advanced a few steps in his shambling, awkward way as if to have a better look at them. He was a fair sized bear and really looked quite good-natured and even friendly.

"Do you think he's a tame bear?" whispered Theo as they all took one snap after the other in

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eager succession and Mr. Van Orton, who had at once set his tripod, took his focus and, just as the bear stopped to have another look, pressed his bulb. Was it the click of the camera or did one of them make some movement which alarmed the creature? They never knew, but an instant later he gave a grunt of disappoval, wheeled suddenly around and disappeared with a rapidity quite remarkable in an animal apparently so slow and clumsy in his movements.

"He seemed to be smiling at us at first, didn't he?" said Theo.

"I suppose he knew that was the right thing to do under the circumstances," laughed Mr. Van Orton, "for photographers always tell one to look pleasant."

"I wish he'd have let me pat him," continued the little girl regretfully; "he looked such a dear kind bear."

"Now," said her grandfather, "let's hurry home for it will be most exciting to get our plates and films developed and see what we obtained. How many did you take, all of you?"

"Five," answered Gilbert.

"Three," said Lady Artingdale.

"I only took one," said Theo regretfully, "but I *tried* to take his smile."

And oddly enough, little Theo's snap-shot proved the very best picture of them all, for she had actually caught the bear's grin and most inquiring

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expression. Mr. Van Orton's large plate was next best and two of Gilbert's were fair, but Lady Artингdale had been too nervous to succeed in any of hers.

They joked Mrs. Van Orton not a little on her running away and little Theo was quite the heroine of the camp for having succeeded in taking a good photo of a live bear, but then, as Bertie said, those little fingers of Theo's had always been as nimble as those of a fairy.

The next day Gilbert, who had wandered out towards the Sentinel Hotel while the others were reading and answering their mail, came tearing back in wild excitement, crying:

"Granddad, granddad, come quick! There are some *real wild* Indians with feathers and bows and arrows and everything. They're by the river and they're going it like anything, fighting and yelling, and—and—oh! do come, granddad!"

"My dear, you surely must be dreaming."

"No, *real* Red Indians, granddad, and a beautiful princess like the pictures I've seen of Indian princesses and a canoe made of bark and everything."

The little boy was so wildly excited that Mr. Van Orton seized his hat and allowed himself to be hurried along the river towards the village. A little before arriving at the hotel he saw that Gilbert had been correct in his assertions, for there were apparently a number of wild Indians in most

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approved costume. After a few minutes, Mr. Van Orton discovered that it was a troupe of clever actors enacting a play for the making of a moving picture reel. Not wishing to make Gilbert lose any of the fun of watching them, he gave a boy a quarter to run and tell the rest of the party to join them. The story was quite an exciting one, the acting good, the Indian princess quite a beautiful girl, and in these exquisite outdoor surroundings the play was all the more enjoyable.

In one of the last scenes the beautiful princess is supposed to be carried off in a canoe by the villain of the piece, while her frantic lover, who arrives just too late to stop him, finally throws himself into the stream to swim after them. Just before he reached the boat it capsized and the actors were both thrown into the water. The onlookers, thinking this was part of the play, were laughing and applauding when to their surprise they saw the photographer leave his camera and all the other actors rush to the edge of the stream with evident horror and consternation, while the poor princess, struggling frantically against the current, cried wildly for help. Her companion could not swim any more than she could, so it was with some difficulty they were both saved and brought to shore again, the river being particularly full that year and the current in that part of it very strong. Added to this, the water, which is really melted snow from the mountains, was icy cold so that

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when the poor players were finally rescued they were shivering and had to be hurried off to the hotel to be taken care of. This of course put an end to the making of the reel for that morning, but the photographer informed Mr. Van Orton that if the actors had sufficiently recovered the next day, they would go through this scene again and finish the play at the same hour so as to have the same lights and shades.

This was done and our friends, who had gone down in good time to see it all, watched the canoe scene with some anxiety and were much relieved when it passed off well. The rest of the play was carried out with great success, the lover rescuing the fair princess and the whole story ending happily.

When it was finished, Lady Artingdale and her mother went forward to congratulate the actors while Mr. Van Orton stopped to discuss cameras and their possibilities with the photographer.

"I'm afraid you must have thought it very heartless of us to clap and laugh when you fell into the water yesterday," said Lady Artingdale to the young actress, "but we thought it was part of the performance."

"It might have been," laughed the girl. "It is no joke sometimes to have to act for these moving pictures and we have to do many dangerous things, but of course we get paid highly for them. One of my friends had to sing for five minutes in a cage

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of lions, but she got a pile of money for it. Still, I'd rather she than I."

"Have you ever done such dangerous things?" asked Mrs. Van Orton with a shudder.

"Almost. The worst I ever went through was when I had to be rescued from a fire. I could hear it roar and feel its hot breath against my face, but I was saved in time, though my hair got a bit singed and my arm slightly blistered. People who look at the movies don't realize all we poor actors have to go through for them," she added with a laugh.

One of the things the children most enjoyed every evening was the cascade of fire from Glacier Point. Camp Curry is just at the foot of the mountain which is one of the highest peaks of Yosemite and has a projecting shelf of rock on which nearly every evening a great bonfire is burned. For several hours some of the young men and visitors of the hotel on the top of the peak carry there dead branches, heaps of enormous fir cones, pieces of trunks of trees and piles of brush until they have a huge stack of wood to which they set fire as soon as it is dark and which throws most weird and fantastic lights and shadows on the peaks and great woods all around. Then, when it has all burned till it is one mass of glowing red embers, they take great poles with which they push it over the edge of the cliff and it falls down three thousand feet like a wondrous glowing cascade

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of fire. It is a most beautiful and inspiring sight and Gilbert was specially excited over it and was not satisfied until they went up to spend a few days at the hotel on Glacier Point and he was allowed to help build the fire and push it over. His mother was terribly anxious lest he should go too near the edge of the cliff, but Mr. Van Orton had declared he would send him in at once if he did not obey implicitly, so the boy was careful to do as he was told and found it most thrillingly exciting even without going so very near the precipice.

Altogether there was no end to the delights of Yosemite. The glorious views everywhere, the ever-varied walks, and rides, and drives, the numberless birds and flowers and butterflies, the great trees two hundred feet or more in height, the rushing streams and the wild beauty of the roaring, dashing waterfalls, all filled their souls with delight and raised their hearts to the good and great God who has made such endless beauty for our enjoyment. It was with bitter regret, therefore, that they had to leave this gloriously beautiful valley, all declaring they would return to it at the very first opportunity.

CHAPTER XV

A FATHER'S PRAYER

THOUGH not very demonstrative when together, Lord and Lady Artingdale wrote to each other every day when circumstances separated them and the children were of course the chief subject of their mother's long letters. So Lady Artingdale had repeatedly told her husband that their baby's eye was no better, that the treatment seemed to have no effect and that the American oculist was little more encouraging than Doctor Blanco had been. Still, being every day with the child, she had not realized how much the white mark on her eye had increased during their three months in America and she was not prepared to see how shocked her husband was at sight of little Theo when he met them at the port of Cherbourg.

"Do you find a great change?" she inquired tremblingly as soon as they were out of hearing of the children.

"Why, yes! Surely you must have noticed it! That white mark is more than twice as big as it was when you left; it is almost as big as a pea now."

"Really!" Lady Artingdale turned white to

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the lips. "I feared it was worse, but it has been so gradual I suppose I did not realize it as you do after not seeing her all this time."

"There is still the great Paris oculist. He is said to be the cleverest in the world. We must take her there at once," said the father. "I will telegraph to him this very day."

"Theo is looking well otherwise, isn't she?" asked Lady Artingdale anxiously. "She seems so strong and merry."

"Yes, she looks well. You all do, I am glad to see, and I expect you have had a delightful time. I have had a wretched one, but of course that does not matter."

"I'm so sorry, Arthur! The heat has been oppressive, hasn't it?"

"Roasting! and my loneliness more oppressive still. But now I have two weeks' leave of absence and we will go straight to Paris and from there to stay with my mother in Touraine. You always enjoy that."

"We *all* do. I only wish you could stay with us longer," said his wife, laying her hand affectionately on his arm and looking anxiously at his worn face. If he had found a change for the worse in Theo's eyes, she too was shocked to see how he had aged and how gray his hair was turning.

Two days later they arrived in Paris and the very next afternoon they had an appointment with the oculist. It was with hearts full of dread that

they drove to the great specialist's, feeling that, so far as human means went, this was their last hope. Lady Artingdale, who could hardly speak for the wild beating of her heart, was trying to comfort poor Theo, who was always much frightened at going to a new oculist, knowing that she would most likely have much pain to go through.

Doctor Tillac was a stout, stumpy, homely-looking man, cold, harsh, almost brutal in his manner and very pompous and impressed with his own importance. Perfectly heartless himself, he seemed to take it for granted that no one had any more feeling than he had, and he prided himself on being very outspoken and never giving any one false hopes. He examined the child's eyes rapidly, utterly heedless as to whether he was hurting or frightening her, then he gruffly told her to go into the next room where she would find some toys to play with while she waited for the others. As soon as he had shut the door upon her he turned to the parents and, perfectly regardless of their anguish of mind, he told them bluntly that there was no hope of cure and nothing to be done. As the child grew older the white film would but increase on her left eye until it completely blinded it and the disease would most likely spread to the other eye before long; indeed he thought he saw signs of its having done so already. They might continue to bathe the eyes with a solution of boracic acid just for the sake of doing something, but

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in point of fact nothing could save the child from becoming blind in time. His fee was two hundred francs. His next patients had waited long, so they must excuse him for being brief—and pocketing Lord Artingdale's bank-notes, he accompanied them to the door of the room where little Theodora was standing, white and tearful, waiting for them. The Viscount, who himself felt stunned by the blow, had put his arm round his wife and tenderly supported her, fearing at every minute she would faint or break down, but when she saw the child standing there looking so tiny and so pathetic, she rushed forward and caught her up in her arms with loving exclamations and reassuring words. Somehow, none of them knew how, they managed to get back into their carriage, where the poor mother sat clasping her child to her breast, tearless and silent but ghastly white and with a wild despairing look of sorrow in her dark eyes. Theo had been sobbing when they first got in, but after a few moments she brushed back her tears and said as she tenderly stroked her mother's pale face:

"Never mind, mama dear! I heard what that horrid culist said; he said Theo's eyes would get worse and worse. He said she would be blind! Don't cry, mama, don't cry," she added, flinging her arms round her mother's neck. "He doesn't know that Our Lady is going to cure little Theo by and by, but we know it, don't we, mama? We *know* she will."

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Brave, trustful little Theo! She was the only one who kept her cheerfulness for the next few days, her very winsomeness and unselfishness making her doubly dear to those around her and adding to the intense bitterness of their sorrow for her. "Bonne maman" was as broken-hearted as the parents themselves and for many days she cried as she had never cried before and even the Earl of Sheendon wrote a sympathetic letter to his son. In point of fact, Lord Artingdale was more broken-hearted than his wife, first because he always felt he was partly the cause of his child's terrible misfortune and secondly, because as yet he could not find comfort in religion as the mother did. Indeed, he looked so deplorably wretched that his wife proposed leaving the children with "bonne maman" and Mezelle and returning to Rome with him, but he would not hear of it, dreading lest she should contract the malaria. So it was decided he should go back to Rome alone, leaving the others with the Countess until the first week in October, when it would be safe for all of them to join him.

After Lord Artingdale's departure, they began little by little to take hope again. Mezelle was nearly as confident as the child herself of an ultimate cure and their hopefulness was contagious. Gilbert cheered up again and began to be his own mischievous, rollicking self once more and the children spent a very enjoyable two months, often seeing their little friends the de Neslacs and other chil-

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dren from the neighboring châteaux and having delightful walks, picnics, rows on the lake, and a good time generally.

Still, when the time came for all to return to Rome, Lady Artingdale could not but feel that her husband would be again distressed to see how much worse the child's eye was, the disease seeming now to make terribly rapid strides. To her surprise he took the matter fairly calmly, telling her that through the Austrian Ambassador he had become acquainted with a world-renowned Polish oculist who had now retired after making a great fortune, but who had consented to see little Theo and do all that was humanly possible for her. Doctor Tillac he said, he considered a regular butcher and they were lucky that he had not attempted some useless and dangerous tentative operation, a thing he was fond of doing.

The day after their arrival Theo was taken to this Doctor Mowskisloff and they found him the greatest possible contrast to the brutal Frenchman. Tall, slight, white-haired and with a beautiful sensitive face, he was a gentleman to his finger tips and very courteous and sympathetic in his manner. He won the little one's heart at once and instead of putting her on an operating table or chair, he sat her on his knee, softly lifted her eyelids and with the gentlest touch of his beautiful tapering fingers inspected the poor disfigured eye, talking cheerily to the child all the time. Then, still hold-



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ing her on his knee, he assured her mother that he would do his *utmost* to cure or at least to hinder the progress of the disease, that he would see little Theo several times during his stay in Rome and prescribe what he could to help her, but that they must leave the issue in God's hands. The parents both felt that he had no great hope of success, but still, his kind manner, his soft voice, and evident anxiety to try his utmost were a comfort to them in their trouble.

That afternoon he met the Viscount again and spoke to him more frankly. He admitted that the case seemed a hopeless one, that the disease from which the child was suffering was almost always incurable and that at the present moment it was evidently making rapid progress. "Still," he added, "there is *prayer*; one can always hope in God's mercy!"

"Ah, then you are a believer!" exclaimed Lord Artingdale.

"Thank God and Our Lady I am, and a fervent one. It has been the joy and comfort of what might have been a sorrowful life."

"Ah! then it is easier for me to ask you something which has been troubling me for a long while. I know that the child's mother, a fervent Catholic, continually bathes the little one's eyes with Lourdes water. Can it do her any harm?"

"Harm! I should think not. It is the best remedy of all, the only one really likely to cure

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her. I cannot tell you the number of cures I have known to be obtained through the intercession of Our Holy Mother. Of course I, a physician, cannot *prescribe* Lourdes water, I could not take to myself the cures worked by Our Lady, but I am always glad when I see it used. Your wife has faith in it?"

"Yes, and the child still more so,"—and Lord Artingdale related to his new friend how complete had been the child's trust ever since the trouble began quite in her babyhood.

The old doctor's eyes glistened with tears and he pressed Lord Artingdale's hand effusively, crying:

"Then take heart, my dear fellow! Our Lady has never yet disappointed any one who so trusted in her and she will not do so now, you may be sure."

During his stay in Rome, good Doctor Mowskisloff visited his little patient every day, but alas! could not detect the slightest sign of improvement, still, on leaving, he told the parents to persevere with the remedies and above all to hope and trust as did the child herself.

Another month slipped by and it became painfully evident that poor Theo was losing her sight more and more. One day that Lord Artingdale thought himself alone with his wife he was talking about it despondently when Gilbert, who had been reading curled up in a corner of the sofa, broke in saying:

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"But you know, sir, Doctor Mowskisloff said he still hoped our Theo would be cured."

"Yes, but from what both he and Doctor Tillac said, it is evident that humanly speaking there is not the slightest hope of it. If Theo was cured, it would have to be by a miracle and the day of miracles is past," answered his father drearily.

"Oh, but sir, Doctor Mowskisloff said he'd *known* many miracles obtained through Lourdes water and prayers, and Mezelle says she saw some miracles when she was at Lourdes"—then suddenly the child jumped up and standing before his father he said with an eagerness that lighted up his childish face:

"Papa! if Our Lady *did* cure our Theo would you believe in her? Would you become a Catholic?"

Lord Artingdale looked startled at the child's direct question, but instead of answering sharply as his wife had expected him to do, he said as earnestly as the child had done:

"If Theo was *really* cured—yes, I *would* believe. I would become a Catholic."

"Even if Theo had been taking Doctor Mowskisloff's remedies all the time?" inquired Gilbert anxiously.

"Yes, I know of themselves they cannot cure her."

"Is it a promise, father?" again asked the little fellow, his voice trembling with emotion.

"Yes, Gilbert, it is a promise," answered his

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father, pressing the child's hand in his. "Your mother is a witness to it."

"Ah! I am so glad, so glad!" cried Gilbert joyfully. "Now I am still more sure Our Lady will cure Theo."

But alas! again the weeks passed and little Theo's eye grew worse and worse. One day when she was putting up her small hand to shade it from the light, her father exclaimed brokenly:

"My poor darling Theo!"

"Never mind!" answered Theo, brightening up into a smile again. "Our Mother Mary will cure me soon!"

"I wish she would hurry up about it, then!" exclaimed her father impatiently.

Theo looked up with a rather shocked expression, then for a minute she seemed to ponder over something. At last she asked, as she laid her small hand on her father's: "Do you ever ask Our Lady to cure Theo, papa?"

Lord Artingdale looked embarrassed and hesitated.

"Well—no—I don't think I ever have," he murmured at last.

"Perhaps she is waiting for *you* to ask her," exclaimed Theo eagerly. "Oh, please! won't you ask her, papa dear?" she added coaxingly as she leaned her head against his breast. "Little Theo would so *love* to have bright eyes that can see, like other little girls."

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"My Theo!" cried Lord Artingdale, catching the child up into his arms and pressing her to his heart with a sob. "I would pray to Our Lady every hour of the day if I thought that would make her cure you, my precious."

"Will you?" said Theo brightly. "How dear of you, papa!"

"What would you like me to say, Theo?"

The child thought a minute, then she said: "Our dear Mother Mary, please cure my little Theo's eyes and I'll love you forever and ever. Amen. That's not too long, is it?"

"No, it is beautiful. I will repeat it constantly, Theo. I promise you."

A few weeks later Lady Artingdale said to her husband:

"I am almost afraid of being too hopeful, but don't you think there is an improvement in Theo's eyes, Arthur? Mezelle and Fortunade and Gilbert all think so and so do I, but I don't know if it is fancy."

"No, I have noticed it too," answered Lord Artingdale huskily. "It appears as if the dear child were right and Our Lady had been waiting for me to humble myself and ask her to cure my darling. I seem to have seen an improvement ever since."

"Oh, Arthur!" cried his wife, throwing her arms round his neck and bursting into tears, "we have suffered much this last year, but if God

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granted me this double blessing I should be too happy for words."

And God did grant the mercies asked through His Mother's intercession, for little by little, slowly but very surely the white film disappeared, and little Theo's eyes became bright and strong once more. About six weeks after Lord Artingdale had started his constant prayers, Doctor Mow-skisloff came again to Rome on his way back to Paris and at sight of the child exclaimed:

"Why, these eyes are cured! The slight film that remains is disappearing and in a few weeks' time there will be no more sign of it. Didn't I tell you to trust in prayer?"

"Yes," cried the little one with a beaming smile. "I always knew that *some* day Our Mother Mary would cure little Theo's eyes, 'cause she loves us all!"

CHAPTER XVI

WITHIN THE FOLD

LORD ARTINGDALE certainly had his faults, still he was the soul of honor and when he saw what he felt to be a duty before him, he was ready to go through any amount of difficulty or hardship in order to carry it out. Therefore, as soon as he had proofs that his prayer was being answered he began at once to receive instruction in the Catholic faith and as he listened to the clear and simple explanations given to him by an eminent Benedictine to whom he had been recommended, the last of his doubts vanished and he wondered how he could ever have been so prejudiced against the true Church.

"All her doctrines now seem so simple to me, so evident, so utterly undeniable," he exclaimed. "I can't think how I could ever have been so blinded as I was or why I was so tortured with doubts for long miserable months. The fact is, I suppose I was really struggling *against* the grace of faith and God in His mercy did not let me rest till I had yielded to it. It was the truly sublime trust and courage of my dear wife and little children which first began to open my eyes. I felt that a

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religion which inspired such heroic patience and confidence even to a mere baby must indeed be a true one. Then Gilbert startled me into a promise to embrace the faith if our Theodora was cured and the child herself finally put an end to my doubts and hesitations by begging me to pray to Our Lady for her. From the moment I began to do that, the tempest in my heart was calmed and I too began to feel hope and confidence take possession of my soul. My prayers to our Blessed Mother, which I had commenced as an irksome duty, became a perpetual source of happiness ; they rose to my lips and flowed from my heart almost continually until I seemed to live in our dear Mother's presence. Now I am just longing for the day when I can be received into the Catholic Church and feel I am indeed her child."

The happy day came at last and on the Feast of the Annunciation, Arthur Carley, Viscount Artingdale, publicly made his abjuration and was received into the bosom of the true Church. His friend the Austrian Ambassador and good old Doctor Mowskisloff, who had hurried back to Rome to be present at the ceremony, both stood sponsors for him, and his wife and children knelt near him, their breasts filled with a joy and thankfulness that overflowed in happy tears. Though Viscount Artingdale had wished the whole affair to be as free from pomp as possible, the news of his conversion had spread through Rome like wild-fire and the great

church was crowded with people who were much impressed by the whole ceremony and specially by the fervor of the new convert. To his intense joy and gratitude, just before he went into church he was met by one of the Cardinals, who was the bearer of a special blessing and congratulations from the Holy Father himself. His Holiness had heard the whole story of the Viscount's conversion and had been touched to tears at the account of little Theo's unflagging trust in Our Lady through her long months of suffering, and he sent word that he would like the Artingdales to come to his Mass the next day, adding that after his thanksgiving he would give them a private audience, as he had many things to say to them and specially wished to give little Theo his apostolic blessing.

As they drove along the streets of Rome in the first gleams of dawn that morning they were struck as they had never been before by the mysterious beauty of the Eternal City, with its hundreds of steeples and domes and its perfume of saintliness. The hard commercial, vulgar, commonplace side of Rome was still sleeping and therefore forgotten, but the lasting monuments raised to the glory of God and the numberless memories and associations with saintly persons and things seemed to permeate the very air. Broken columns, ruins of palaces and pagan temples told of the vanity of worldly things, while the grand imposing churches and basilicas, the statues of saints and, more than all,

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the dome of St. Peter looming in the distance, told of the grand Church of Christ, one and indivisible, the Church builded upon the rock, which would subsist in all its glory and purity through all eternity.

Lord and Lady Artingdale sat hand in hand, their eyes swimming with happy tears, their hearts too full for words, until they came to the entrance of the bridge of San Angelo with the great castle standing before them, the Tiber flowing on either side and away to their left the dome of St. Peter's and the Palace of the Vatican. The first gleams of the sunrise were turning the sky to a brilliant amber and throwing golden beams on the whole scene, the sleeping city, the distant mountains and the swiftly flowing river.

"Oh, mother ! isn't it beautiful ? Did you ever see anything so lovely ?" cried little Theo, clapping her hands with joy at the glorious sight.

"Doesn't it somehow make one think of Heaven ?" murmured Gilbert quite pensively. "The river seems as if turned to a stream of gold and somehow,—I don't know why, one seems to feel God so very near this morning ; don't you think so, father ?"

"Yes," answered Lord Artingdale in a husky voice. "I feel as you do, Bertie, as if I were at the very gate of Heaven, if not in it. My heart will really be Heaven soon, for I shall have the God of Heaven in my very heart before many days are over. Don't forget to pray for me, children."

"Oh, I *always* do," answered Theo brightly. "Just lots! I used to pray Our Lady to make you less disagreeable and you see she did. Now, I pray lots of other things for you."

"I'm glad I am *less* disagreeable," answered her father with a happy smile as he pressed a kiss on the child's soft cheek. "Am I still *rather* disagreeable?"

"Oh, no, not one bit, papa," answered Theo, patting his face lovingly; "you're just dear, now; isn't he, mama?"

"Ever so dear," answered her mother with a radiant smile; "but here we come to the Vatican. Oh, how my heart does beat! I feel almost frightened at this honor and happiness. Mind you behave respectfully and well, children," she added, thinking rather anxiously of their total lack of shyness.

Their Mass in the Holy Father's private chapel was, as they all said afterwards, like a short time in Paradise, and they were too wondrously happy in their loving fervor to feel in the slightest degree nervous. Then, after his long thanksgiving, they were called in to see the Holy Father who was so cordial and hearty in his felicitations, so sweet and lovable with the children that all restraint vanished at once and they felt that he was indeed a Father and a loving one. He told Lord Artingdale that he had heard how much he was risking by joining the true Church and that he congratulated him all

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the more warmly on having done so. He felt sure, he added, that even in this world God would reward him a hundredfold for any sacrifices he might have to make and bade him bear all opposition and losses not only with patience and courage but with holy joy.

"And this is the little girl who was cured of blindness by confidence in Our Lady, I hear," he added, drawing the child to him and kissing her on the forehead, while he raised his hand to bless her. "You must remember, little angel, to use those bright eyes of yours, and all other gifts that God has given you, in His service and that of His Holy Mother."

Theo gazed up into the Holy Father's face with an anxious look in her great dark eyes and whispered as she leaned confidingly against his shoulder :

"I'm afraid I don't ! I'm only just a little Theo that isn't very good, you know. Sometimes I'm so naughty that mother has to put me in the corner ! I get cross, and stamp my foot, and I don't like it when Fortunade does my curls, because she pulls my hair and it hurts, and sometimes I—I won't eat my bread and milk of a morning," she added, as if she thought that was indeed a mortal sin.

The Holy Father smiled as he stroked her curly head, saying kindly : "Well, I did not expect to hear your confession, carissima, but I absolve you from those sins. You must try never to be naughty



any more. It is not always easy, I know, but if you think of the dear Infant Jesus it will help you to be good."

"You're always good, aren't you?" continued Theo eagerly. "It must be lovely to be a saint like you, only I'm *so* sorry you're a prisoner. Still I'm glad you have such a nice prison," she added, looking around at the very simple but comfortable room. "I didn't think prisons were like this."

"Yes, I have much to be thankful for," said the Holy Father gently, "although," he added sadly, "I miss my liberty very much and often long for the time when I used to be able to roam in the woods and on the mountainside."

"I'm so sorry. I'll pray to Our Lady that you may never feel sad. May I come and see you sometimes?" she added wistfully.

"Yes, I shall be glad to see you when I have time. You are like a little ray of sunshine and we can talk together of our dear Mother Mary whom you love so much."

Then, still keeping his arm around the child, the Pontiff continued talking to the parents, encouraging, advising and blessing them.

"I have been told that you have wished to delay making your First Communion for a few days," he said, addressing Lord Artingdale.

"Yes" answered the diplomat. "I did not wish to ~~lose~~ all my joys at once and I felt as if I would like a few more days in which to prepare."

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"I am glad of it," answered the Pontiff kindly, "for I should be happy to give it to you myself and I would like your little Theo to make hers the same day. Come to my Mass this day a week and I will give you all Holy Communion."

"Theo, Your Holiness! but she's a mere baby! She has had no preparation!" gasped Lady Artingdale.

"She needs very little more," answered the Holy Father, still stroking the child's hands. "Her innocent heart is full of love and trust in Jesus and Mary, and you can prepare her quite sufficiently in a week. Jesus will love to dwell in that pure heart and it is my wish that He should do so," he added gravely.

Of course the Holy Father's wish was law, specially on such a subject, and for the next week Lady Artingdale and Mlle. Lamotte carefully prepared Theo for her confession and First Holy Communion. They were touched almost to tears by the child's fervor and by her desire to finish preparing a beautiful crib in her heart for the Infant Jesus.

When the great day came they all went to the Vatican together, their hearts too full for words this time, and Lord Artingdale and his little daughter were the first to receive Holy Communion from the venerated Pontiff's hands, Lady Artingdale and Gilbert receiving after them. Lord Artingdale was almost overcome with emotion and as he

looked down at the tiny mite whose sweet face was so radiantly beautiful in its earnestness, and realized that it was to her faith and confidence and courage above all that he owed this wondrous grace and joy of his conversion, he prayed earnestly that he might be worthy of this great gift.

The two First Communicants outdid each other in fervor, and Lady Artingdale was fairly weeping with joy. They felt as if their half hour of thanksgiving had been but a few minutes and were quite astonished when summoned to appear again before the Holy Father, whose beautiful spiritual face was radiant with happiness as he blessed them and bade both Lord Artingdale and Theo to be faithful adorers of the Blessed Sacrament and frequent communicants all the rest of their lives. They listened with beating hearts to his burning words of love for Jesus in the Tabernacle and each received from his hand a beautiful scapular medal which was henceforward one of their most treasured possessions.

The Countess was in England with her husband at this time and great as was her happiness at her Arthur's conversion, she feared to anger the Earl by going to Rome to be present at the ceremony, and felt that she could help her beloved son better by striving to pacify his father than by being with him, as she longed to have been on this, the most beautiful day of his life.

"I cannot tell you, my dear Arthur," she wrote,

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"what a bitter sacrifice this has been to me, but I look upon it as a just punishment for never having had the courage to win you to the true faith when you were a child. Your sweet wife and children have at last repaired the terrible injury I thus did to your soul and though rather jealous of their happiness at having achieved this, I am truly thankful to God.

"I dare not, however, show my joy here, for I'm afraid you have much trouble ahead, my dear boy, and I am anxious to keep in your father's good graces so as to be able to counteract, a little, that bigoted Christopher's influence over him. You know how jealous he has always been of you and how he would love to step into your shoes, the lazy, narrow-minded fellow! Of course this is just his opportunity. He thinks he is working in a righteous cause by exciting your father's wrath against you for becoming a Catholic, and I must say that from the first hint you wrote him of your change of faith, the Earl has been fairly beside himself with anger. At first he raved and stormed against *me*, but when I told him that I was ashamed to say I had never had a thing to do with it, he turned all his anger against you and Eleanor. I really thought at first he would work himself into a fit! Then he wrote you a letter which he evidently thought would deter you from your purpose and he calmed down for a day or two in spite of a few visits from Christopher. But when he got your

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answer yesterday telling him of the actual date having been fixed for your reception into the Church, he turned simply livid with rage and paced about like a maniac for hours. I expect you will hear from him by this mail, my dear boy, but don't let it trouble you too much. Thank goodness, he cannot deprive you of the entailed property or title and of course you will get every penny I have,—no fear of my leaving any to your brother!

"So buckle to, my Arthur, and set your face against the storm which will blow over you for a time. After all, God is all-powerful and He will help us through this trying time. Remember you've got your mother's sympathy and hearty congratulations."

The very same day that Lord Artingdale received this letter from his mother he also had a perfectly furious one from the Earl, accusing him of deceit and base ingratitude for all the love he had showered upon him and telling him that if he persisted in such "a wicked and insane thing" as to give himself up to a false and idolatrous worship, he would not only immediately stop his very liberal allowance and disinherit him of all his personal fortune and property, but would institute at once a lawsuit in order to try to obtain a release from the entail and leave the whole property and even the title to Christopher. The letter was passionately reproachful, vehement, abusive, and Lord Artingdale, though he had expected some-

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thing of the kind, was feeling much upset and distressed when Gilbert, who had overheard some fragments of conversation about it, said as he looked at his father with a joyful smile :

“ Don’t you feel proud and happy, father ? I feel so proud for you.”

“ Proud ? ” asked his father in astonishment.
“ What of, Gilbert ? ”

“ Why, of suffering because you’re a Catholic,” answered his youngest son. “ In the gospel doesn’t our Lord say, ‘ Blessed are those that suffer persecution for justice’s sake ’ ? Isn’t that what you’re doing ? ”

The Viscount looked pensive, then at last he said : “ Well, I suppose you are right, Gilbert, and I ought to feel honored that God judges me worthy of suffering something for the faith. But I was troubling about all you children. You see, my dear boy, if grandfather does carry out his threat we’ll be *almost* poor.”

“ And what do *you* care ? ” answered Gilbert scornfully. “ Why don’t you tell grandfather that that won’t matter one snap to you ? You’ll be an ambassador before long and even if you couldn’t earn any money yourself, haven’t you got three strong boys that would be glad to work for you and mother ? I know a chap in America that got quite a lot of money selling papers and working in gardens and I could do that all right, for he was no bigger than me.”

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To Gilbert's surprise, his father's eyes filled with tears and he caught the little fellow up in his arms and pressed him to his breast.

"God bless you!" he exclaimed in a husky voice. "Yes, I know you'd do it, Bertie, but there'll be no need for *that*, my boy. Still, I'm proud to think my little lad has so much pluck and love for his parents and whatever happens we'll bear everything cheerfully, for we have one another's love and entire sympathy nowadays as well as our trust in the protection of God and His Holy Mother."

Soon the conversion of Viscount Artingdale and the Earl of Sheendon's fierce anger and resentment over it were the subject of conversation and excitement both in England and Rome, people taking sides with father or son, and the Artingdales found they had become very unpleasantly notorious so that it required all their courage and patience to go through this trying time cheerfully.

CHAPTER XVII

A TIME OF SUSPENSE

LETTERS of expostulation or congratulation came pouring in from England, France and America, but two of these, those from his elder boys, were balm to their father's heart and filled him with joy and thanksgiving. Both the boys were eager in their congratulations, telling their father of their intense happiness at hearing of his conversion and assuring him that they were perfectly willing and indeed proud to stand by him and abide by the consequences of his abjuration. Philip was specially ardent in his assertion that he would far rather make his own way in the world than be what he termed disdainfully, "a bloated Earl."

On that score Lord Artingdale had therefore nothing but consolation and his happiness in his new-found faith and in his now perfect understanding and sympathy with his sweet wife made up to him for all he had to go through from his father and brother. As to Christopher, his letters were perfectly insulting and he worked his hardest to still further stir up his father's anger against the Viscount.

Meanwhile little Theo's eyes were getting better

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and better and there was no longer but the lightest little white spot in the left one. She could see perfectly and that rather pathetic cheerfulness she had kept up during her long trouble now gave place to real happiness and she was as merry as a grig, skipping and running about like a young fawn and reveling in her restored sight.

“What a good papa you were to pray for your little Theo,” she cried one day, throwing her arms round his neck and hugging him. “It’s just lovely to be able to see everything quite bright and not have my eyes hurting a bit. Wasn’t it good of Our Lady to listen to you and don’t you love her just lots ?”

“Yes, I love her dearly and will try to serve her all my life, Theo. She not only opened your eyes, but mine too.”

“Were your eyes bad too ? I’m so sorry ! But you never told me, papa !”

Lord Artingdale laughed. “Not the eyes in my face, darling, but the eyes of my soul were blinded. But you can’t understand that yet, little Theo.”

“Yes, I do,” answered Theo earnestly. “You know I’m *quite* a big girl now. Four, very nearly five ! You mean that even if you are such a big, clever papa, there were lots of things you didn’t understand so you didn’t love God and Our Lady, but now you do !”

“That’s just it, carissima, and now that I know and understand, it makes me very happy.”

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"Me too. We're all happy now, aren't we, mama?" she added, looking up joyfully into her mother's radiant face from which the anxious, almost sad look had completely vanished.

And though the Earl of Sheendon would have been intensely astonished could he have known it, the first months, during which their title, position and fortune hung in the balance, were some of the happiest of their lives. Before his conversion, Lord Artingdale's prejudices against everything Catholic had made him take a dislike to Rome and Italian customs and people, but after he had entered the Church this feeling had given place to one of intense admiration. He seemed to love every tree and stone in the place and thought with deep regret that the time would very likely come when they would have to leave this charming city with its touching associations, its relics and footprints of saints and martyrs, and its wealth of wonderful art treasures, to say nothing of its own intrinsic beauty, its monuments, parks, and fountains and glorious surroundings of wild Campagna and distant mountains.

He was deeply interested in his diplomatic work and nothing would have made him neglect the very slightest duty connected with it, but whenever he had any spare time he enjoyed nothing more than taking his wife and children to visit one of the numerous beautiful churches or other places made sacred by the blood of martyrs. They

would read up together the life of a saint, then make a pilgrimage to all the spots connected with his life and martyrdom. Some of these pilgrimages took them a whole week to accomplish, as did that devoted to following the landmarks of the great St. Peter, of which Rome is so full. This caused them to visit several of the most prominent and interesting churches, among them St. Pudenziana, built over the spot where stood the house where St. Peter lived with many other saints, and the little Church of Domine Quo Vadis near which, as he was fleeing from Rome to avoid persecution, he met our Lord carrying His Cross and on asking Him, "Lord, where goest Thou ?" was answered, "To Rome to be crucified a second time," and understanding his Lord's reproof retraced his steps and returned to the city to suffer martyrdom. Then the fine Church of St. Peter's Chains and the little Chapel of the Parting which marks the spot where St. Peter and St. Paul separated before going in different directions, the one to be crucified, the other to be beheaded. Also the Church of St. Peter in Montorio built just where he was martyred, and last but not least the Basilica of St. Peter where his body lies and that of St. John of Lateran containing a magnificent reliquary enclosing his head. Besides these fine churches, they visited the Mamertine prison, in which both St. Peter and St. Paul were chained to a column and where they caused a miraculous spring of water

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to flow in order that they might baptize two of their jailers and forty-seven of their fellow prisoners. Over this horrible prison, one of the most fearsome that could ever have been invented, is now a rather dark, mysterious looking little church called St. Peter in Carcero, which seems to have caught something of the gloom of its surroundings.

But pilgrimages to churches and hallowed places were not their only outings, and they all enjoyed to the full the glorious parks and gardens of Rome, specially those of the Pincio and the Villa Borghese. The Pincio gardens and park are one of the fashionable resorts of Rome, and not only are they beautiful in themselves, full of magnificent old trees, choice flowers, fine statuary and deliciously cool, splashing fountains, but, as they are situated on a rather steep hill, one gets from them a perfectly grand view of the city of Rome and the surrounding country. There the best military bands play several times a week and, specially on Sunday, the park is crowded with carriages, automobiles and a cosmopolitan crowd of pleasure seekers. Then there is also the more secluded and quite as beautiful park around the Villa Borghese, more like a bit of wild woodland scenery with its clumps and groves of tall trees and its numerous stretches of meadow-like land all studded with brilliantly crimson and rose colored anemones like jeweled stars amid the green grass. Here, too, the birds sang in every tree, and there was some comfort in

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hearing them in these grounds, as they were enclosed, and therefore there was no likelihood of the poor birdies being cruelly caught on glued twigs and afterwards carried about all over the city in open cages in which they almost beat themselves to death in their fright, finally being sold as food—yes, as food ! even little birds like linnets and wrens and goldfinches—or else to linger as cage birds for the rest of their lives. This constant cruelty to the birds was one of the few distressing things about Rome, and Mezelle and the children often bought quite a number of them for a few cents, and had them put into a small cage which they carried to the Villa Borghese, where with intense pleasure they set them at liberty and then sat down to enjoy watching them preen their wings and burst into a song of ecstatic joy at having recovered their liberty.

Besides all their enjoyment of Rome itself, the Artingdales were having a specially pleasant time with their friends both in the diplomatic circle and in Roman society, for every one was anxious to show them their sympathy. Invitations of all kinds kept pouring in and though they could not accept all of them, the Viscount and Viscountess felt touched at the interest that was shown in them. As for the children, they had a perfectly delightful time with their little friends of divers nations, and nothing of interest happened in Rome without their having a chance to see it. One day there was to be a grand review on the Piazza del Indepen-

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denzia and they were invited by their friends of the Roumanian Embassy to see it from their palatial residence. Gilbert was much interested in watching the horses and the troops of different kinds, but Theo specially enjoyed the music and laughed and clapped her hands with glee when the Bersaglieri came running by at full speed while their band played a lively march and their great masses of cocks' feathers glistened and gleamed in the sun. I must say everybody clapped and shouted when the Bersaglieri passed, for they are the great favorites of the people of Rome who are vastly proud of this Alpine regiment with its fetching costume and its way of always going at full speed. Another time there was to be a great function at the Chamber and the King and Queen, all the Court and government officials and the diplomats from the different countries drove there in their state carriages and that time Lady Artingdale, Mezelle and the children went to view the parade from the Spanish Embassy. So altogether Gilbert and Theodora had a most enjoyable time and in spite of the disturbing news from England and some natural anxiety about the future, even the Viscount and Viscountess were as happy, if not happier, than they had ever been in their lives. They were happy in their children, in each other and in their friends, and, above all, happy in their faith and full of confidence in God's loving Providence.

In the old Earl's heart, on the contrary, there was nothing but bitterness, anger and a wild desire to force his son into obedience to his wishes. Angry as he was with him, he could not bear to think of leaving the greater part of his fortune to what he called "that fool of a Christopher," and yet he would not allow it to be said that he had given in, that he had forgiven Arthur for having gone directly against his wishes. He called in a famous lawyer, one who had been the family counselor for years and who had known his two sons ever since they had been little chaps and he was furious to find him quite inclined to take the Viscount's part. The lawyer argued that Lord Artingdale and his wife were great favorites in society, at Court, and among the tenantry, and that the Earl would be much blamed if he dealt harshly with his son; that, in point of fact, Viscount Artingdale had done nothing dishonorable or even deceitful, as he had informed his father several weeks beforehand of his intention of joining the Roman Church; that many other noted peers were Catholics and were, in spite of that, among the foremost politicians, and that the best thing to do was to let the matter drop for a time and talk over things quietly with Lord Artingdale himself when he came over to England in the summer. By that time they would both of them have cooled down somewhat.

But Earl Sheendon would not listen to any of

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this. He had told his son that he would disinherit him if he ever became a Catholic and he was a man of his word, therefore, he would do it. As for talking matters over with him, he never wished to see him again or his scheming wife either. She had bewitched him and he, the Earl, had been a fool not to make more objections at the time of the Viscount's marriage. But because he had been too easy once, it was no reason why he should fall into the same mistake again, so if Artingdale did not give up this utter folly he should suffer for it. In vain the old lawyer argued and pleaded, so at last, finding that the Earl would only employ some one else if he did not give in to his wishes, he agreed to do as he was desired and endeavor to find out if there was not some way of getting the entail abolished so that none of the Artingdales would get a particle of the estate.

At first the Viscount had desired to let things take their course without in any way defending his rights, but his mother made him understand that this would not be fair to his children and insisted on his securing the best legal adviser to fight out his side of the question, promising to pay all the expense of it herself.

For weeks and months all the English peerage was in a state of excitement over this case, the sympathy being in great majority on the side of Viscount Artingdale. Personal friends, relatives and even casual acquaintances, tried to make the

old Earl see the injustice he was committing and to show him how derogatory to the honor of the house of Sheendon it would be to have the estates cut up and the unquestionable owner of the title reduced to comparative poverty. No less a person than the King of England himself found an opportunity of speaking of all this privately to the Earl and pleading for Viscount Artingdale who had, he said, always proved himself such a clever diplomat and zealous worker for his country and who, after all, had committed no crime or dishonorable action. Liberty of conscience was one of the things in which England gloried and the Viscount was certainly of age to choose for himself.

"How would your Majesty like it if the Prince of Wales joined the Catholic Church?" blurted the Earl angrily.

"I regret to say that according to the present laws of England, that would disqualify him for the throne," answered the king, "but that would be no doing of mine. Personally, I should never dream of interfering with my children in such a matter after they are of age to judge for themselves. Excuse me for saying so, but I do not think any father's prerogative goes that far, be he prince or peasant."

CHAPTER XVIII

LA ROCHE ALTÉE

L ENT and Easter had passed by with their touching ceremonies and their message of love and hope and now the radiant month of April was over and Our Lady's month had begun. The heat at midday was getting intense and Doctor Montefiore declared that Lady Artingdale and the children ought not to stay any longer in Rome. Never had they found it so hard to part even for a time, and the Viscountess was specially distressed at having to leave her husband just when he had so much to worry and trouble him.

"Never mind, Eleanor," he said tenderly as he looked into her beautiful, tearful face, "I shall know that your heart and your sympathy are with me and we will meet constantly in spirit at the foot of the Tabernacle. We never had that comfort before and it is the greatest on earth. Besides, we can write constantly to each other and the months will slip by somehow."

"Yes," answered Lady Artingdale, "and Doctor Montefiore says I may come back early in September, so I shall certainly do so."

"What! before the opening of Stonyhurst?

What will you do with the boys? You can't leave them with my mother, as she will be in England."

"No, I will send them back to Stonyhurst if you don't object. You know the Fathers keep many of the foreign boys during the whole of the holidays and give them a very happy time, and it was only the other day that Phil was writing that he would like to do some coaching work before college opened, so that will just suit him."

"It won't suit Emil," said Lord Artingdale with a laugh.

"Emil need not do any extra work though I should be very glad if he would! He's such a dear good boy in every other way, but I do wish he were not so indolent."

"Oh, he'll grow out of that, I expect. He's an easy-going sort of lad but he may 'buckle to' all of a sudden and astonish us all."

It was already the middle of May when the whole party except the Viscount started for La Roche Altée, where they were going to spend the summer. "Bonne maman" had thought it best under the circumstances not to leave Earl Sheendon that year and had therefore offered her daughter-in-law the use of La Roche Altée, which had the triple advantage of being secluded, far from England and also far from the too bewitching Marguerite de Neslac. When they were in the train all ready to leave, Gilbert grasped his father's hand and said almost tearfully :

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"Oh, father, it just makes me sick to think you're not coming with us. You'll come part of the time if you can, won't you?"

"Yes, Bertie," answered his father, putting his hand affectionately on the lad's shoulder. "As you would say, you little American, 'I bet you I will!' I'm glad to see that you really wish to have father with you nowadays. The time is past when you'd rather take a flogging than say so, hasn't it?" he added with a happy smile.

"Bet you it has! But, father, you see I really didn't know you then, and besides——"

"Yes, I know," laughed Lord Artingdale. "Your poor Fairy there had to storm heaven to obtain the favor of my being less 'disagreeabull.' But now, Gilbert, remember I trust to you to try not to get into more mischief than is absolutely necessary and to take good care of mother and Theo and Mezelle. You are the only man of the party for the present, you know."

Just then the train whistle blew. Lord Artingdale had to tear himself from their loving embrace and as long as they could see him they hung out of windows waving their handkerchiefs and kissing their hands to him.

There were not very many passengers on the train and they had a first-class compartment with sleepers all to themselves, so after they had recovered a little from the sorrow of parting with the Viscount they began to enjoy the beautiful

scenery, the nice lunch the chef had packed in their luncheon basket and the other delights of a journey. All went well until the evening, when the sky clouded over, a thick mist hung over everything and the lonely, mountainous country through which they were speeding looked dreary and desolate in the extreme, so that the children's merry laughter ceased, the recollection of having left their father behind came back, and they all began to feel almost as dreary as the weather. Wishing to create a diversion, Lady Artingdale and Mezelle again opened the luncheon basket, lighted the spirit lamp and prepared the evening meal. Having a meal is always a cheering occupation for children, and eating in a railway carriage always seems to particularly appeal to them, for some inexplicable reason, so before long they were merrily chatting and devouring chicken, cold tongue and delicious salad, anticipating cake and jellies and fruit to follow. So busy were they that at first none of them noticed that they had stopped an extraordinarily long time at a tiny railway station and that the officials of the train were talking and gesticulating wildly with the station-master and a number of peasants who had grouped themselves about the little depot. At last the unusual stillness of the train and the vehemence of the discussion outside attracted their attention and putting her head out of the window, Mezelle shouted in Italian to one of the officials asking if anything were the matter.

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"Well," he answered hesitatingly, "not yet,—but we are wondering what we had better do! You see this is a single line and an express train is signaled as coming down towards us. The line here is a very winding one, going in and out around the mountains, and at a sudden bend in the road that express might dash into us before we knew it was coming. We've tried and tried to signal on, but we can't get an answer."

"Hadn't we better get out?" exclaimed Lady Artingdale. "It would be preferable to pass the night in the village rather than run the risk of being killed or maimed."

"The village is miles off and you would find no accommodation to speak of. No, Madame," added the man respectfully, "I would advise you to remain where you are. I can assure you we will take every precaution, for we have no more wish to get killed than you have."

Just then, after all their parleying and discussion, the train began to move slowly on, its conductor walking well ahead of it and waving a red lantern while the whistle shrieked unceasingly and every now and then before coming to a sharp bend they stopped to whistle still more loudly and to listen for the coming express. Nothing more weird and depressing could be imagined. Darkness was falling over the whole landscape, a fine drizzling rain had begun to fall and the marshy land around them looked gloomy and uninviting, while the

great mountains had a threateningly mysterious appearance.

Lady Artingdale vainly tried to reassure the frightened children who were far too scared to eat any more and clung to their mother fervently reciting the rosary and starting at every sound they heard. Mezelle, who was on watch, hung half out of the window intently looking and listening for the oncoming train which might be bringing death to them. All down the train she could see people with their arms out of windows already grasping the handle of the door in readiness to jump out at the first alarm. So the train continued to crawl on, shrieking and whistling like a thing in pain, then stopping again for the men to listen. Now they left the open country and as they began to wind around among the great mountains, they seemed so hemmed in by them that there appeared to be no means of escape. Still the poor weary conductor trudged on in the soaking rain, well ahead of the train, risking his own life to save those of the passengers. For nearly an hour they continued in this way, now stopping, now going on slowly, while every one on board waited in agonized expectation of the coming crash.

At last when the country around had become as dark as pitch, they slowly drove into another little country depot where they found the express train side-tracked and most impatiently waiting for them! A flow of violent and not particularly

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choice language went on between the officials of the two trains and of the little station and finally, relieved of all anxiety, the guard jumped on board again, the train gave a whistle as of triumph and defiance and then dashed out into the night at full speed in order to make up for lost time.

The children threw themselves into their mother's arms fairly sobbing with relief, and then, after they had all congratulated themselves on their escape and knelt down to make a fervent prayer of thanksgiving, they shut up the windows, pulled down the blinds and settled down to their much delayed supper. They were too tired out by their time of anxiety to eat much, however, and were all glad to get to bed and dream of dear Rome and the father they had left behind.

The rest of the journey was uneventful and they were soon settled in the beautiful old battlemented Château of La Roche Altée in Auvergne. It was one of the very old feudal castles, built on an almost inaccessible spot half-way up the steep and rocky side of a high mountain, or rather extinct volcano, as are nearly all the mountains in this central part of France. The château itself was a perfect picture with its numerous towers, its ivy-covered walls and its old drawbridge, now no longer in use. It stood out on a projecting shelf of granite, so that it almost seemed to hang over the abyss and there was no way to it but a winding mountain path, so that one had either to walk up to it or ride some

very sure-footed horse. The luggage all came up on mule back, and altogether it was delightfully wild and primitive, and as to the view from every window, it was simply ideal! Beyond the well-kept grounds and small park of the château one looked along the steep mountainside covered with vineyards down to the valley below with its luxuriant meadows and willow copses, through which the impetuous mountain stream dashed gurgling along its rocky bed, looking from a distance like some great silvery blue ribbon winding in long loops until it was lost to sight. On the other side of the valley rose tier upon tier of chains of mountains, one behind the other, some of the nearer ones clad with verdant woods, others barren and stern looking, while the further Mont Dore Mountains, ever snow-capped, looked pearly and iridescent like great peaks of mother-of-pearl.

Charming as the place was for grown people of robust health it was anything but an ideal one in which to look after rather restless, enterprising children, and for the first few weeks Lady Artingdale and Mezelle had a somewhat anxious time of it. Gilbert fully *meant* to be good and obedient, but the wildness and perils of the place just charmed him and he was constantly getting into some scrape or danger. One time he leaned too far over the edge of the precipitous cliff to gather a flower for Theo and went down head first, but fortunately was stopped by a tree and managed to

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crawl up again by clinging to bushes and making almost superhuman efforts. He was much cut and bruised, and his hands were torn and bleeding from having had to hang on furze bushes and brambles. As for Mezelle, who had seen him go over, she was sick for days from the fright she had had. Another time Gilbert rode his pony up an impossible mountain path covered with loose stones and in spite of the poor little beast's frantic efforts to keep its footing, it stumbled and slipped and both boy and pony rolled, fortunately separately, quite a distance down the mountain. A projecting shelf of rock saved them and they were able to crawl home, but the pony was lame for weeks and Gilbert had a broken rib.

After that he was more careful and Theo gave them the next scare. She was playing in the nursery, which was on one of the upper stories, and the wind suddenly blew her doll's dress from the window sill where she had placed it. Stretching out eagerly to catch it she lost her balance and must have fallen out and been instantly killed had not Fortunade, who was happily standing close by her, caught her by the feet and pulled her in again. Her chin got such a bad bump against the stone window sill that it was cut open and a doctor had to be sent for from several miles away ; still they were thankful things had been no worse. Lady Artingdale immediately sent down to the village and had iron bars put up to each of the children's windows.

For a few weeks after this, no more accidents occurred and they were beginning to really enjoy the place when one day, as Theo was busy playing dolls with some little girl friends from a neighboring château, Gilbert went off by himself to seek a more manly occupation. When collation time came every one was astonished not to see him appear, and as the afternoon wore on and there was still no sign of the child, they began to be anxious and to go about the place calling and looking for him, but in vain. Dinner time came and still no Gilbert, and the Viscountess and Mezelle were nearly beside themselves with anxiety, while little Theo could hardly see out of her eyes for crying. Servants had been sent off in all directions, some down the mountain to the road below to see if he had not fallen down the cliff somewhere, others wandering about right and left in every possible direction.

"Do you think he could have gone down in the dungeons and got lost, or ——" Mezelle dare not finish, for her own knees shook under her at the thought of those dungeons with their fearful oubliettes opening into awful holes of which no one knew the depth.

Lady Artingdale nearly fainted at the thought, though she maintained that Gilbert would surely not have gone there, as he had given her his word he would not do so. Still some of the men servants groped their way down with lanterns and called and searched, but with no result.

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At last Mlle. Lamotte suggested they should go up to the highest tower from whence they could see all round for miles and as they hurried pantingly up the steep stone steps, they thought they heard a faint cry. With wildly beating hearts they pushed on and when they finally opened the door leading on to the roof of the tower, there stood poor Gilbert, who had been shut up in that lonely place for hours and was fairly exhausted with screaming and shrieking for help. It had been quite an accident this time and really no fault of his, for they were often allowed to go on the top of this tower, which was quite safe because of its high battlements all around. The door was generally securely fastened back and he had not noticed the catch was not on it as he went out on to the roof. A sudden gust of wind had blown the door to and as the hasp was on the staircase side of it, poor Gilbert had found himself a helpless prisoner. In vain he cried and screamed and beat against the door ; he had been unable to make any one hear. "And I was beginning to think I'd never be found and would have to starve to death," he added with a sob, "so I knelt down and prayed, gee ! I prayed like everything that you might find me, and at last you did, but my ! it seemed an age !" added the poor little worn-out fellow.

Still the next day he was ready to make fun of his experience and was as lively as ever, so his mother was thankful when, a few weeks later,

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Philip and Emil arrived for their holidays, as she knew she could trust the elder boys to look after their restless little Bertie.

The remainder of the time passed very delightfully. They had many friends in the neighboring châteaux, the weather was gorgeous, the country ideal and their days were one round of picnics, excursions, rows on the river, long rides and pleasant evenings either at home or with some of their less distant neighbors. September came all too soon for the elder boys, but the Viscountess, though grieved to part from them, was delighted to be able to go back to her husband, who had had a very trying time with the intense heat and the continual and harassing letters from England, and was intensely relieved to have his wife and children with him once more.

CHAPTER XIX

HIS LAST CARD

AFTER weeks of legal discussion and much excitement among the partisans of both sides, it was at last discovered that the entail could *not* be waived aside, but that only a very small amount of the property was really entailed, therefore the Earl was at liberty to dispose of all the rest as he wished. If he willed it away from his eldest son, the next Earl of Sheendon would be one of the poorest instead of one of the wealthiest peers of the realm, both as to property and income, but nobody could deprive him of his title or seat in the House of Lords.

Though not completely satisfied, the old Earl still rejoiced considerably to find that he could disinherit the Viscount of so much and immediately wrote a letter to him stating bluntly the facts of the case and adding that now he knew exactly what he would lose by defying his father's wishes, he would perhaps think better of it and give up his Popish notions.

Lord Artingdale answered firmly that his religious convictions were far too deep to be moved by any such considerations and that he would far pre-

fer losing riches or even an Earldom in this world to losing his place in the Kingdom of Heaven for all eternity. He added that he was deeply grieved to have angered and disappointed his father, for whose past love and kindness he was deeply grateful and whom he would always continue to love and revere as in the past, whatever happened.

In spite of the conciliatory and affectionate tone of this letter the Earl went into another paroxysm of rage on receiving it, then when his anger cooled down a little he felt harassed and miserable. He was too proud to go back on his word and own that he had been in the wrong, yet he felt that he would be much blamed both at Court and in society and would make himself intensely unpopular with his tenantry if he carried out his purpose, besides which, now it came to the point, he longed to find some more worthy heir than his second son, of whom he was anything but proud.

All at once he thought he had a bright idea and determined to try whether he could not induce Philip or Emil to give up their faith for the sake of becoming heir to his great wealth. The boys were young and probably thoughtless, like most children of their age, he thought. Even Philip was barely sixteen, and as to Emil, who was not quite thirteen, he always seemed such an easy-going, pleasure-loving, indolent little fellow that it would surely be easy enough to persuade him.

One day, therefore, to everybody's intense sur-

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prise, no less a personage than the Earl of Sheen-don drove up to Stonyhurst College and demanded to see his eldest grandson.

When Philip entered the parlor a glow of pride filled the old Earl's heart at the sight of the strikingly handsome, distinguished looking lad with his fearless manner and winning smile. His grandfather looked scrutinizingly at the boy's face, so serious and thoughtful for a young fellow of his age, at the high intellectual forehead, the firm mouth and chin, the dark, keen, blue-gray eyes that glanced so frankly up into his face, and in spite of him he felt a certain shame in speaking of the subject for which he had come. He began, therefore, by congratulating the boy on his constant success in his studies and his perfect record as to conduct and studiousness. For a time the conversation rather lingered, then the Earl broached the subject of his son's having joined what he called the Romish Church, and of his own disapproval of it and determination not to leave his fortune to Catholics.

"Then you will have to leave it away from all of us entirely, grandfather," coolly answered Philip, who had been gazing at the Earl with a look which had somewhat disconcerted him.

"I hope not," he blurted angrily. "I hope you may not *all* be such fools as to give up one of the finest positions and estates of England for the sake of your idolatrous worship. You boys don't know

what all the consequences of this will be, you particularly, Philip, who would in that case find yourself one day a well-nigh penniless Earl."

"I don't mean *ever* to be a penniless Earl," answered Philip, quietly. "I know I have plenty of natural ability, I am ambitious, fond of work and will have many influential friends, and I hope to make my mark as a politician some day."

"A politician!" sneered his grandfather wrathfully. "You will find you need money in plenty to succeed in that career."

"I mean to have it," answered Philip, still in his perfectly calm, determined manner. "As soon as I have passed through college and university and got my degrees, I mean to borrow money enough to start some good business venture and ——"

"Business!" perfectly shrieked the old Earl, leaping up from his chair as if he had been shot. "You! a future Earl of Sheendon, talk of starting a business."

"Why not? What can it matter to you if you disinherit us from the fortune which ought rightfully to be ours, my lord?" queried Philip coldly. "Better be a rich, influential merchant than a pauper Earl. In fact, if this all really comes to pass, I, for one, will drop that meaningless title which is all very well for any one who has the means and position to live up to it, but which, as you rightly infer, would be ridiculous for a busy merchant and public man. Personally, I would

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far rather sit in the House of Commons than in the House of Lords."

The Earl was almost suffocated with astonishment and indignation. His own grandson, the descendant of one of the proudest houses of England, calmly proposing to drop his title and make money in business! He looked fairly apoplectic with rage. At last, recovering his breath a little, he began to argue with the boy, to plead with him, and offer him every possible inducement if he would only give up his faith and become his grandfather's favorite and heir.

A slightly disdainful smile came over Philip's handsome face as he listened, but he did not interrupt his grandfather's flow of eloquence or make any sign of disapproval until at last, fairly out of breath with his long argument, the old man stopped and said not unkindly:

"And now, my boy, what answer have you to make to my proposal?"

"All I have to say, my lord," answered Philip, still in what his grandfather considered his exasperatingly quiet manner, "is that although I spoke to you just now of my intention of going into business, I have no wish to start by selling my soul, either for money or lands. I have no wish to betray my God and my faith for thirty pieces of silver, like Judas."

"Betraying your God! Why, my good fellow, on the contrary, you would be serving Him in a

pure and rational fashion instead of worshipping idols —”

“I have never worshipped idols,” broke in Philip, “never worshipped but one God in three persons, and worshipped Him in spirit and in truth. If you knew a little more about the Catholic faith, grandfather, you —”

“I know a sight more about it than I want to,” shouted the Earl angrily. “I know that it has been the bane of my life and must part me forever from those whom I would have loved and loaded with my favors. I don’t want to hear another word from you, Philip; I never wish to see your face again. Go now, and send me your brother,” and as Philip, with a profound bow, turned and left the room without another word, the old man sank back into his chair with a heart-sick groan.

He did not have to wait long before Emil came into the room, a stout, fair, good-looking lad with soft brown eyes like his mother’s, masses of wavy, fair hair and a pink and white complexion which any girl might have envied.

Yes, he might do as a makeshift, but he did not appeal to his grandfather’s heart or pride half as much as his elder brother did. Nor did he half intimidate the Earl by his scrutinizing glance as Philip had done, so the old man began by asking him bluntly if his brother had informed him of the subject of his visit.

“No, my lord,” answered Emil in his cheerful,

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complacent way; "he simply said you wanted to see me. I expect," he added with a rather shame-faced laugh, "you wish to blow me up about my last report card. I know it's pretty bad, but I'm really going to try to do better this year, I really and truly am, grandfather, because mother is so grieved over my laziness, but I just *hate* Latin and Greek and don't see what earthly good I'll ever get by plodding through all those musty old books about Romans and Greeks."

"That was not the subject of my visit, though of course I am sorry to have a bad account of your studies. The fault may lie with your teachers, not yourself, though. But I want to speak to you about a far more important subject," and once more he burst out in his angry denunciation of the Viscount, his determination to find a Protestant heir and his tempting promises of wealth, power and happiness if Emil would only become a Protestant and allow himself to be adopted as the Earl's son and his heir.

"If you consent to this, I will even humor you so much as to take you out of school at once and let you live at home. You shall have a tutor who will be instructed not to make you work more than a few hours a day. You shall have horses of your own and everything a boy of your age could possibly dream of wishing for," and again the Earl stopped abruptly and waited eagerly for his little grandson's answer.

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Emil had been looking very pensive during the latter part of the Earl's vehement discourse and now answered hesitatingly :

"I—I don't know what to say all of a sudden like this. Can't I have a little time to think it over, grandfather? I'm only just a boy, you know."

"Certainly; that's only fair and I'll come again to-morrow at this time. Will that do?"

"Yes, my lord, I mean grandfather. I'll think what my answer ought to be."

"Don't talk to your brother about it, mind, and remember all the advantages I promise you besides the intense benefit of belonging to the reformed faith," added the Earl as he rose to leave, full of hope in the success of his plan.

In spite of the three years' difference in their ages, Philip and Emil had always been well-nigh inseparable chums, and Philip was therefore not only hurt and astonished but not a little alarmed when his brother refused to talk over the purpose of his grandfather's interview with him and answered evasively when his elder brother burst into indignant denunciations of the offer the Earl had made to him.

"Surely, Emil, you must see the infamy of it," he exclaimed passionately. "Not only did he ask me to give up my faith for the sake of a fortune, but he expected me to be a party to the ruin and social disgrace of my own father. The cold-hearted, bigoted old—well, I mustn't say what I

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think of him. What did he want with you? Did he offer you estates, wealth and position in return for turning your back on your God and your family?"

"He wasn't pleased about my reports," answered Emil evasively.

"But what else did he say?"

"What does it matter what else he said?"

"It wouldn't matter one fig if you were open and aboveboard about it, but I can't think why you are so strange and mysterious, Emil. Surely you don't dream of ——"

"Of course I don't. I've got a headache, that's all, and I can't think why you need bother the life out of a fellow like this," answered Emil, with quite unusual irritability as he hastened away to his class.

Philip looked after him with a perfectly sickening dread. Could it be possible that the old Earl had got round the child and extracted from him some promise of apostasy? His true-hearted Emil! who had always seemed so fervently pious, more so than Philip himself. Oh, the boy thought despairingly, if this trouble came upon him it would be more than he could bear, and he seized the first opportunity of going to pour out his grief before the Tabernacle. While he was in the chapel he was surprised at seeing their confessor go into his box, though it was quite an unusual hour for him to do so and then, to his intense relief, he found that the penitent was his brother Emil who stayed

a long time in the confessional, so long, in fact, that Philip had to go back to his class room before his brother came out. Still, the elder boy felt greatly relieved, for although something unusual was evidently going on, Emil could not be intending to do anything wicked or he would not seek help and advice of his confessor. The next day at Mass both boys received Holy Communion and Emil seemed so fervently devout that Philip's fears were completely allayed and he began to be very remorseful for having even suspected his brother of such villainy.

That afternoon, however, the Earl returned, as he had promised to do, eagerly hopeful and ready to take the boy away with him at once if he received a favorable answer. But to his great disappointment, the child still seemed quite undecided.

"I don't see, my lord," he murmured, reddening painfully, "how you can expect me to be willing to join, all of a sudden, a religion I know nothing about. If you kindly lent me some books that explain it and gave me time, I might give you an answer before long, but I don't see my way to believing something I know nothing about."

"That's perfectly true and just, my boy," answered the Earl, rather relieved at not getting a definite refusal, "and I shall be only too glad to lend you some good books showing all the fallacies of the Romish religion and the advantages of the Protestant reform. But I would like you to study

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them *at once* and let me know your decision as soon as you can."

"Yes—well, it may take me some little time to decide," answered Emil evasively. "You see it will be for all my life!"

"Surely, surely, but you'll soon see the truth of what these books say. I'll have some sent to you to-morrow, or rather I'll bring them myself, else they might not be given to you. Here, child, I expect your pocket money is pretty low, schoolboys' pocket money generally is, so here is something to set you afloat again," he added, putting a large gold coin into the boy's hand. "By the bye, this plan of ours better be kept a perfect secret, else we'll have your parents and brother and these Jesuit priests setting some spell over you to prevent you from seeing the truth. So mind, not a word of this, even to your brother."

"All right, sir, I mean my lord," blurted Emil, again blushing like a girl.

"No, not my lord, Emil; granddad let it be, for, please God, you'll be my own boy and heir very soon."

He would scarcely have felt so hopeful as he did, however, had he seen the look of anxiety which Emil cast after him as the door closed behind him, or the disgusted manner in which the child wrapped up the gold coin, touching it as if its very contact sullied his finger tips and then hiding it away in the further depths of his drawer.

CHAPTER XX

EMIL'S ORDEAL

"I SAY, Phil, I thought your grandfather had quarreled with you all," cried one of his schoolmates. "Glad to find that's all over now, for he seems to come and see you daily. My! don't I wish I had such an attentive granddad! Does he fill your pockets with tin? He ought to, for he's rich enough in all conscience."

"My grandfather! He's never been here but once that I know of," answered Philip. "What made you think he came daily?"

"Well! the testimony of my own eyes and of those of James MacLean. You said yourself he came two days ago and yesterday I was going to carry a letter to the prefect's room when I fairly bumped against his Grace, the Earl of Sheendon, who looked as if he would have liked to slay me on the spot for daring to be in his way, and to-day Jimmy MacLean told me he had seen him going to the parlor followed by a liveried footman carrying a whole armful of books. Why, what's the matter, old boy? You're as white as a sheet."

"Oh, it's nothing. I twisted my ankle a bit. Excuse me, George, I've got to hurry up or I'll be late for my recitation," added Phil, who felt as if

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the whole place were swimming around him and yet was determined to avoid any further conversation on the subject.

Emil was of course in a much lower class than his brother and when school was on they had but few opportunities of seeing each other, but during the freedom of this holiday time they had at first been much together so that when he found that his younger brother studiously avoided being alone with him all that day, Philip became more and more anxious and finally went to bed feeling perfectly sick with dread and apprehension. What ought he to do? he kept asking himself as he feverishly tossed from side to side, vainly trying to calm himself by reciting his rosary. He must see his brother the next day, he finally determined; he *must* thresh the whole matter out with him, come what might.

Next day at early Mass he prayed earnestly for help and guidance and soon afterwards he discovered Emil sitting by himself in a secluded part of the grounds and, white with anxiety, demanded of him in a voice made harsh by emotion if he had seen his grandfather again on the two previous days and why, if he had done so, he had not mentioned it to him.

"I saw him yesterday," answered Emil, reddening in spite of himself, "but I really couldn't have mentioned it to you considering I never set eyes on you all the rest of the day. Did you expect me

to send you a special messenger to tell you of the fact?"

"Of course not, but if we didn't meet it was because you dodged me all the time. Both George and James MacLean spoke of having seen grandfather come to see you and there is something not aboveboard going on, I'm sure, by your queer, mysterious ways, Emil. You're not like yourself one bit since grandfather came to make me that infamous offer and probably made the same to you. Surely! oh, surely! you wouldn't think of selling your soul for that beastly fortune, of being an apostate, a Judas! It would break our mother's heart and mine too," he added in a broken voice.

Emil's eyes filled with tears and he answered in a hurt voice: "I really don't see what right you have to accuse me of such a thing or to set spies over me to watch whom I see in the parlor. I wouldn't have believed it of *you*, Phil."

"But why are you so secretive and what were those books that were brought to you? God knows I don't wish to think ill of you, Emil, but I feel responsible for you in a way, you're so much younger than I am, and if this goes on I'll *have* to write to mother about it."

"About what? What right have you to charge me of anything? You even dare to accuse me of being a Judas, you, my own brother Phil; you might surely know me better than that!"

"But why can't you tell me what all these

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mysterious visits are about? There's never been a secret between us before."

"Because I have no right to, because even if I had I wouldn't tell you now that you've been mean enough to suspect me of doing such a dirty, caddish, hellish thing!" burst out Emil passionately. "I'll never forgive you, never feel the same to you again! And I used to love you more than anybody," he added with a sob in his voice, as turning abruptly away, he ran and hid himself in a quiet corner of the chapel, where he cried as if his heart would break.

Days and weeks passed slowly by; school had opened now and somehow or other the rumor had got about that Emil was playing false to his family and receiving visits and bribes from his grandfather. As all Catholics were naturally on Lord Artingdale's side in this affair, the poor boy was therefore looked upon with scorn and aversion, even by those who had hitherto been his friends, and as his quarrel with Philip had never been made up, the two continued cold and distant to each other, which was, Emil's accusers declared, a further proof of his guilt. Still, though the Earl had visited the child more than once during the wretched weeks, Philip had heard nothing of it and being utterly miserable over his estrangement from Emil he was longing to make it up with him and reproached himself bitterly for having probably rashly judged him.

One day, however, as he was hurrying past one

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of the parlors towards his class room, he was startled by the sound of familiar voices and stopping unconsciously to listen, recognized those of his grandfather and Emil. This time there was *no* doubt about it; the boy was receiving visits from the Earl and hiding the fact from him. Why should he do so if he were not ashamed of something he was doing? But yet the Fathers must know of these visits—still, they could not suspect the object of them or they would not allow them to continue—they did not perhaps know all the painful facts of the case! What was he to do? Speak about it to the Fathers? Write to tell his parents? Both these things would be telling tales, one of the most unpardonable acts in his code of morals, and besides he might perhaps be getting his Emil into trouble which he did not deserve. No, it seemed to him the only thing to do was to speak again to his brother, force his confidence, entreat him to tell him the truth. But how was he to achieve this? He had failed utterly last time he had tried. "Oh God, help me to save my Emil!" he murmured in anguish as he sat down mechanically at his desk and opened a book of which he could not understand a single word in his bewildered frame of mind.

Suddenly he remembered a passage in his mother's last letter: "You have seemed to me rather out of spirits lately, my dear boy. Is anything the matter? I hope you are not grieving over our probable financial losses. What do they matter after all

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so long as we have God and each other? But if ever you are really in trouble, my Phil, do not forget to go and cast all your sorrows and anxieties at the foot of the Tabernacle. You will find there a Comforter who will never forsake you, a Friend who will never misunderstand and a Counselor who can never fail to guide you aright." Jesus in the Tabernacle. Ah, yes! that was the Friend to whom he could confide all without hesitation, so excusing himself on the plea of a violent headache, he left the study and hurried to the chapel, where he fell on his knees and poured out his fears and sorrow and anxiety to that best of Friends.

At first he seemed too engrossed with his trouble to notice anything, but as soon as he began to feel the soothing and comforting influence of Our Lord's presence, he became conscious of a strange sound in the chapel and realized he was not the only one pouring out his grief before the Blessed Sacrament. There was a favorite dark corner near one of the confessionals and Philip soon discovered it was from there that came the sounds of pitiful, heart-broken sobs. Some one seemed in as great a misery as himself and softly stepping across the chapel the boy came upon his brother Emil kneeling in an attitude of utter despair with his head buried in his hands. In another minute Philip was kneeling beside him and flinging his arms around him, drew the boy to his breast exclaiming:

"Emil, dear, what is the matter? Dear old boy,

don't cry like that. It breaks my heart to see you so miserable. Can't you tell me your trouble? Can't you let brother help you, dear?"

"All the boys—think I'm doing something wicked—they all suspect me—and whisper—about me—and shun me—and oh!" added the child with a little cry of pain, "even you suspect me, Phil—even you! I can't bear it, I can't, I can't!"

"Emil, you mustn't feel so bad, indeed you must not. Oh! you can't think how wretched I've been since we quarreled that day. I'm afraid I was horrid to you, but I didn't mean it, laddie, honest I didn't. I was only so miserably anxious about you. You know it isn't that I don't care for you, Emil. Why, there's no one dearer to me than you are, old man, not even mother."

"I know—I was the one that was horrid that day. I ran away when you were trying to make up. I felt so mad, so hurt, to think you suspected me. They all do and just now as I was coming out of the parlor—I heard one of the boys say: 'Ah! there goes that little traitor,' but I wouldn't mind so much about those other fellows if *you*——"

"Emil, can't you trust in me?" interrupted his brother earnestly. "Can't you tell brother everything? You know I wouldn't peach to a living soul."

"I know that, but I can't! I've given my word. I know appearances are against me, but, Phil dear, couldn't you believe in me even if I can't ex-

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plain?" pleaded Emil, looking beseechingly up into his brother's face with those brown eyes of his that were so like his mother's. "I'm sure I'd never have doubted you, Phil, whatever happened, never, never! Won't you try and believe in me, brother? oh, *please do!*"

"I do believe in you, dear old chap," answered Phil. "I know there must have been some mistake, but I'll trust you now, I promise you I will, and our dear Lord here is my witness. Don't cry any more, Emil boy; whoever turns against you, Phil will never do so again. Forgive me, dear old chap, won't you?" he added tenderly.

Emil gave a sob of relief. "Oh, I'll forgive you fast enough, brother," he said eagerly. "I'm *so* happy to think you'll trust me even though I can't explain, that I don't mind how horrid any of the other fellows are to me now. But oh! I just couldn't bear to think *you* mistrusted and suspected me, brother."

"Poor old chap! I'm ever so sorry I was so mean to you. Never mind; whatever happens it will never occur again. I say, Emil, couldn't you tell mother or father?"

"No, but Father Quinn knows."

"Ever since that first day grandfather came, when you went to him?"

"Yes; he's known all along."

"Why didn't you tell me, Emil? It might have saved us both all these weeks of misery. If I'd

thought Father Quinn knew, I'd have felt it must be all right. Let's say a prayer of thanks to our dear Lord for having made us understand each other, then we'll go out a little while. You'll feel better in the fresh air."

"Wasn't our Lord good to me?" whispered Emil, as they rose from their knees. "I was just asking Him to make it all right with you and then, Phil, when I felt your arms around me and heard you speak so kindly once more, oh, you can't think how good it felt."

"Poor old chappie! It was *too* bad of me," cried Phil remorsefully. "Never mind, I'll try to make it up to you some day. I say, Emil," he added as they were parting to go to their respective classes, "if any of those fellows bother you just come and tell me; I'll settle them."

"What! and tell tales!" cried Emil, with his frank, boyish laugh. "You wouldn't have me do that, would you, Phil? Never mind, I'll live it down. I don't mind anything else now I've got you again, brother."

Another week had passed away and in spite of many black looks and rebuffs from his schoolmates, Emil had kept his cheerfulness, for had he not his chum brother's sympathy besides that of his kind confessor? After all, this trying time would pass away and it had its compensations, for never had the boy felt as much fervor either at Holy Communion or in his visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

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Meanwhile, in the midst of the peaceful happiness of the reunited Artingdale household in Rome, a telegram from the Countess had fallen like a thunderbolt from a cloudless sky. It was a cipher despatch addressed to her son and contained these words which sent sorrow and dismay to their hearts :

“ Have discovered my husband has been endeavoring for weeks to persuade Emil to apostatize for sake of becoming his heir. Child has asked time to decide. Is reading anti-Catholic books lent by grandfather, who is hopeful. Act quickly while it is yet time. Countess Sheendon.”

On first reading this telegram, Lord Artingdale’s feeling had been chiefly one of anger and indignation against his father. Then the danger to the child’s immortal soul struck him with horror and he felt perfectly sick with grief and anxiety. Hastily ringing for his carriage, he ordered his coachman to drive home as quickly as possible and there met his wife, who was just going out for a drive with Mezelle and the children. The minute she caught sight of his face she knew something terrible had happened and though the Viscount tried to break the news to her as gently as he could, she was fairly crushed with the poignancy of her grief.

“ Oh, Arthur ! ” she cried, wringing her hands in despair, “ we *must* save our child from this, we must, we must ! Let us go to him at once ; let us bring him here where your father could no longer

influence him. Oh, I would sooner a thousand times see him dead before me. My Emil a deceiver and apostate! He, who always seemed so open and so pious! to think he should so have deceived us, for he has never mentioned a word of this in his letters!"

In their heart-breaking anxiety the Artingdales had not noticed the presence of Mlle. Lamotte and the children, but now both Gilbert and Theo ran to throw their arms round their mother and endeavor to comfort her.

"Poor mama! don't be so sad!" exclaimed little Theo lovingly. "What is the matter with Emil? Did you say he was going to be an apostle? I thought it was just lovely to be an apostle? Why do you cry, mama dear?"

"Oh, I wouldn't cry for *that*, my Theo, but they are trying to make your brother give up his faith, turn his back on Our Lord and believe dreadful things about Our Lady," cried Lady Artingdale, again bursting into tears.

"Oh, Emil would never do that, mama. I'm sure he wouldn't; would he, Bertie?"

"No siree!" exclaimed Gilbert indignantly; "no fear of brother Emil letting himself be hiked into anything like that. He's all right, is old Em, and though he's so quiet, you can never *make* him do anything he don't want to. Even Phil can't do that."

"I feel the children are right, dear Lady Arting-

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dale," cried Mlle. Lamotte eagerly. "I've known Emil so well for years and I'm sure he's incapable of being a traitor to his faith or of acting deceitfully to you. You know the Countess is always rather inclined to look at the dark side of things and she may have been misinformed or Emil may not understand what his grandfather really wants him to do."

"Anyhow," put in Theodora, "we'll ask the good Jesus to make it all right, won't we?"

But the distracted mother was inconsolable and wanted to start at once for Stonyhurst. Her husband was rather opposed to this, fearing it might still deepen the break with his father and perhaps precipitate matters, and not liking his wife to travel alone in her present state of grief and anxiety. In any case there would be no possible train to go by until six o'clock that evening, so they had plenty of time to think about it. At last Mlle. Lamotte suggested that they should ask the advice of Padre Angelico, the good Benedictine monk who had instructed the Viscount in the faith and was now their friend and director. All agreed this would be the wisest thing to do, and Lord and Lady Artingdale immediately drove to the monastery to tell him of their trouble.

He looked grave, but after a few minutes' thought told them that he felt sure they had no cause for such deep anxiety over this. The Jesuit Fathers were not likely, knowing the family cir-

cumstances, to let the Earl visit the child or lend him books without finding out what his purpose was and protecting the boy from all harm. It would be, he averred, an insult to their vigilance and good judgment to think otherwise, and he strongly objected to their going to Stonyhurst or even writing or telegraphing to the child about this matter until he had first sent a despatch to the Rector of Stonyhurst telling him of the rumor and asking him if he knew anything of the matter. Rather reluctantly the parents agreed to abide by his decision and wait until they received the Rector's answer, which was to be addressed to them. After reading it, they would know better what further steps to take. In the meanwhile they resolved to pray hard and wait as patiently as they could for the telegram from England.

"How long will it be before we can get an answer?" asked Lady Artingdale anxiously.

"Well, several hours at least," answered her husband. "We must offer up this suspense and bear it as patiently as we can, dear."

"I tell you what we might do," cried the Viscountess. "Let us drive home and fetch Mezelle and the children and then all make a pilgrimage up the steps of the Scala Sancta."

"Yes, that's a very good idea," answered her husband. "I only wish I could accompany you, but I cannot stay away from the embassy any longer. You can leave me on your way."

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The Scala Sancta or Sacred Staircase is a long flight of marble steps believed to have belonged to the palace of Pontius Pilate, up and down which Our Lord passed many times during His Passion. The staircase is encased in a wooden covering with small openings here and there, through which one can see and kiss the marble steps which were probably stained with the blood of our dear Lord as He stepped wearily over them on His way to the Court of Herod, then back again and finally to Calvary. The faithful do not walk up the steps, they slowly ascend them on their knees, meditating on Our Lord's Passion and come down again by another stairway.

At the foot of the stairs are two beautiful groups of statuary, one of them representing Judas betraying his Master with a kiss, and at the sight of this the poor mother fell on her knees in a very paroxysm of grief. Then, strengthened by her prayer, she rose and taking little Theo by the hand, they began slowly ascending the holy steps, praying fervently as they paused on each one.

On coming out of the Scala Sancta they went into the magnificent Basilica of St. John of Lateran where they again poured out their sorrow and petitions before the Blessed Sacrament, then calmed and comforted they went home to wait as patiently as they could for further news.

But oh ! what hours of anguish those were and how fearfully slow they seemed to pass by.

White, tearless, with blanched lips and aching heart, the poor mother went through her usual routine of the day as in an awful nightmare, thinking of nothing but that bright, boyish face which she longed to be able to take between her hands and plead with as only a mother *can* plead.

It was two o'clock in the morning when at last there was a violent ring at the bell and the telegraph messenger boy delivered the Rector's answer :

" Need not have slightest anxiety. Emil behaving splendidly and acting on orders of his confessor."

With a wild sob of joy, Lady Artingdale threw herself on her knees to thank God, then falling into the arms of her husband, she sobbed out her intense relief after those hours of unutterable misery.

" Oh, Arthur !" she exclaimed, " I thought I had tasted of the full bitterness of the Cross when I feared our darling Theo was blind, but that sorrow was as nothing to what this has been."

Lord Artingdale smiled. " I'm afraid, dearest," he said tenderly, " that neither of us had sufficient trust in God and that we ought not to have given way to such sorrow as we did. Still, I hope God will forgive us, for He knows of what frail stuff He made us."

As they passed the children's room, Gilbert cried out drowsily : " Mama, have you had any news ? " and as his mother bent over him and told him of

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the Rector's answer with tears of joy in her eyes, the child answered stoutly :

"There! Didn't I tell you old Emil was all right? I never believed he'd do such a thing, never for one minute. Our Emil is a trump, bet your life he is. Well, I'll say my rosary to-morrow in thanksgiving. Our Lady knows I'm too sleepy now," and closing his weary eyes the child fell asleep again with that delightful faculty of childhood, while Mezelle, who had hurried out of her room in a wrapper on hearing Lady Artingdale's voice, grasped her hand with heartfelt joy and congratulation, exclaiming:

"Thank God you are relieved from this terrible dread! It would have been too fearful to have such a thing happen! Still, I never for one minute could doubt our Emil. He isn't that sort of fellow," she added with a radiant smile.

"You were right and I was wrong," admitted the mother, "but now my joy is all the greater for what I went through. Will you be ready to come with us and bring Gilbert to the eight o'clock Mass to-morrow? We must all make a Communion of thanksgiving."

"You won't be too tired?"

"Tired? No," answered the Viscountess with a laugh. "I feel as if I'd never be tired again. I'm too happy."

CHAPTER XXI

THE STAG HUNT

BUT a few days after this the Earl of Sheendon again made one of those short absences from town which had so excited his wife's curiosity and had finally led to her discovering the object of his visits to Stonyhurst. It was over a month since the old man had first spoken to Emil and now he was determined to have a definite answer one way or another. But once more Emil put him off with arguments and discussions on points of faith.

The Earl had been brought up in one of the very narrowest sects, one of those which believes neither in the Blessed Trinity nor in the Sacraments and he had at first wished Emil to belong to that, but now finding the child's belief in Three Divine Persons could not be shaken, he had resolved to let him embrace any Protestant sect he might like to choose. Very narrow and bigoted, the old nobleman was, as he himself admitted, no hand at religious discussion and he never could get the better of Emil, who was drilled beforehand in all he had to say by lengthy interviews with good Father Quinn. This irritated the Earl not a little, for it was humiliating not to be able to refute the arguments of a little

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boy ; still, he had grown to love the bright, intelligent child and so longed to be able to adopt him for his heir, that he was willing to make compromises.

“ Well, if it’s the Trinity and the Sacraments that you don’t want to give up, Emil, you may join the Church of England if you like. They are Protestants in a way, though they imitate the Catholics so much that you’ll hardly know the difference. I’m sure I shouldn’t.”

“ Oh, but I would,” cried Emil. “ Why, grandfather, if you’d give me a beautiful diamond pin and I was fool enough to change it for a cheap imitation, wouldn’t you think me a very stupid boy ?”

“ Would you like a diamond pin, Emil ?” asked his grandfather, anxious to change the conversation.

“ No,” answered Emil wearily. “ I wouldn’t like anything in diamonds. Indeed,” he added, the tears starting to his eyes, “ there’s nothing I would like, grandfather, but to be able to please you and be your boy, not that I want your fortune or anything of that kind, but just because I love you,” he added, looking up tenderly into the stern worn face of the old man.

“ I love you too, Emil,” answered the Earl, drawing the child to him ; “ I love you dearly, and if you want to be my boy that’s easy enough. You’ve only got to come with me now. We’ll see about

your joining the Protestant Church and everything will be all right. We'll both be as happy as kings."

"Oh, no, grandfather! I couldn't," cried Emil, shrinking away with a look of distress. "I'm ever, ever so sorry to disappoint you, but I *never* could give up the Catholic Church, I *never* could believe in any other. I—I want to be a Catholic priest some day!"

The old Earl sprang up, white with rage.

"A Catholic priest—you dare to tell me *that*, after my waiting patiently for your decision all this time! What do you mean by it? You've been just keeping me waiting and fooling around in order to get presents and money out of me, I suppose."

"Oh, no, indeed, indeed I haven't, grandfather," answered Emil, with quivering lips. "I wanted to try to comfort you, to try to make you understand what we believe—that it is good, and pure and true. And as for your presents, I felt like you, that I had no right to them, that you were giving them to me under a mistake, so here they all are, my lord," he added tremblingly, as he handed him a small parcel. "I never meant to keep them."

"You've been trying to convert me to your pippish notions, you deceitful little hypocrite. You've been delaying me all this time with your false, insinuating ways. Confound you! You're the worst of the whole bunch," stormed the old Earl, roughly

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pushing the child aside and hurrying towards the door.

"Oh, please, my lord! won't you take these?" cried Emil anxiously.

"No, hang you! I'm not in the habit of taking things back. Get out of my way, will you!" and banging the door behind him, the Earl walked out of Stonyhurst College for the last time with rage, despair, and real sorrow at his heart.

Meanwhile Emil, leaving the parcel of money and gifts on the table, went back to his class room feeling in a quiver of excitement and divided between sorrow at having, as he thought, failed to help his grandfather, and joy to think he would now have no need of hiding anything from his chum brother, or, indeed, from any one.

As soon as he could do so he rushed to find Philip, exclaiming:

"Oh, Phil! I'm so glad, now I can tell you everything. Grandfather came again to-day and went away very angry, so it's all up between us."

"But, Emil, what is 'up' between you? You don't mean to say you had any hesitation refusing his offer if it was the same he made to me?"

"No," answered the child, "but when I went in to him that first day he was looking so old and so sad that it made my heart ache, so I wondered what I ought to say and if I couldn't help him in some way. Then when he told me that if I became

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a Protestant he would make me his little friend and his heir to nearly everything, I said I must think over it and I went to ask Father Quinn what to do."

"And what did he advise you?"

"He told me to say I must look into the matter. Then he said when grandfather brought me the books *he* would read them and tell me how to discuss some of the things with grandpa and try and make him see that the Catholic faith was the true one. So that's what we've been doing, only grandfather had made me promise to tell nobody, not even you, and that was why I never spoke of what was going on to anybody but Father Quinn in the confessional."

"Poor old Emil! and while you were trying to do apostle's work we were suspecting you of wishing to become an apostate for the sake of a fortune!"

"*You* didn't think so *all* the time; *you* believed in me this last week or two though I couldn't tell you all the truth, didn't you, Phil?" cried Emil, looking up at his brother with loving pride.

"Yes, but I ought never to have doubted you for one single minute. I shall never forgive myself, never!"

"I don't think you really doubted me, old boy," said Emil brightly, throwing his arm around his brother. "You were just anxious about me, that's all. It was rather a hard time altogether, but

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Father Quinn told me to offer it up for grandfather's conversion. You can't think how dear poor grandpa can be when he means to be kind, Phil! I got quite to love him, and when he went away at last feeling so angry and disappointed I know—it—it made me feel bad," added the boy with a sob in his voice.

"Good old Em! it's just like you. Well, we'll pray hard for poor grandfather's conversion. It must be just awfully hard to have sorrows and disappointments and no Blessed Sacrament to go to for help and comfort, mustn't it?"

After he got home from this last trip, Earl Sheendon was so stern and irritable that for a day or two no one dare question him or scarcely approach him, and the Countess, though she said nothing, was much relieved, feeling sure he must have been disappointed in his efforts to pervert his grandsons from their faith. In spite of her, however, she felt touched by her husband's evident misery. He seemed so aged, so broken, so much altered since he first received the news of Lord Artingdale's decision, that she began to feel quite anxious about him and was more gentle and affectionate to him than she had been for years.

On the following Monday Christopher came to see them and remained closeted with his father for some time. The Earl did not inform him of what he had been striving to do, but told him bluntly that he *supposed* he would have to make him his

heir to all but his entailed property, though he much regretted having to do so.

"You'll kill every bit of game there is on the estate before the year is out and make ducks and drakes of the property, I've no doubt," continued the old man tartly. "But I can't help it. Artingdale won't listen to reason, and I'm not going to give in about the religious question."

"Of course not! You could not possibly suffer a Papist to influence your tenantry and boast of being one of the largest landowners in the country!" exclaimed Christopher, putting on an air of virtuous indignation.

"Umph!" growled the old Earl. "I don't know that a Papist would disgrace the family name any more than a fool would."

Christopher pretended not to hear this remark and, vainly trying to hide his joy and triumph, inquired of his father whether he had changed his will as yet.

"No, nor am I going to, immediately. There's no hurry about it. I'm hale and hearty and good for twenty years or more unless you intend to polish me off in order to get into your fortune."

"Why, father! how can you say such things? I only meant—one never knows what may happen," stammered Christopher, reddening, "and it would be such a shame if the Sheendon estates passed out of Protestant hands after all," he added, trying again to arouse his father's anxiety on that score.

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But the Earl did not at all relish the suggestion that he might die any day, and answered angrily :

" Of course one never knows what might happen. You might shoot yourself by mistake or something of that sort and then if I'd been in too much of a hurry, I might have to write my will all over again. Anyhow, I've promised to go down to Gidden Hall for the last deer hunt of the year. I'll start early to-morrow morning and certainly won't do anything about the will until my return."

Christopher was bitterly disappointed, but he tried not to show it too much and after a few minutes' silence he asked suddenly : " Would you mind lending me Mephisto while you're away ? "

" Mephisto ! I lend him to no one. Besides, I've already sent him to Gerald's. He's the best hunter I have and the most untirable one."

" Yes, but he is dangerous, specially in such rough country."

" He's perfectly sure-footed," answered the Earl ; then with a harsh laugh, he added, " You are mightily solicitous about my safety all of a sudden. I suppose, though, you wouldn't so much mind my riding Mephisto if only I'd made my will first. Well, in spite of your anxiety for my welfare, I mean to ride Mephisto and I don't mean to write my will again until Friday ; indeed, I have engaged the lawyer for that day. Oh, you needn't look glum ; I warn you I mean to live for twenty years at least, so you needn't hope to step into my

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shoes just yet. In point of fact, I may yet change my mind, though that's said to be a woman's privilege."

Christopher dared say no more but he was in a fever of anxiety and longed for the Friday to come, so that he might feel sure the new will was made and signed.

The next day the Earl departed for his friend's mansion in Somersetshire, while Christopher returned to Suffolk, where he was busy murdering water-fowl along the seashore, just for the mere pleasure of killing.

Lord Gerald's stately old Elizabethan mansion looked very gay that day, standing as it did in an ideally beautiful flower garden surrounded by one of the most magnificent parks one could dream of. The grounds stretched over the undulating country as far as the eye could see, with shimmering lights and shadows under the great oaks and elms and horse chestnuts centuries old, which made it look like a dense forest, while here and there were large open stretches of deliciously green lawns.

This Wednesday was one of those perfectly gorgeously beautiful autumn days when the air is keen and bracing, the sky a cloudless blue and the bright sun just gives sufficient warmth to make the temperature perfect. The densely wooded hills all around were literally ablaze with autumn tints of brilliant yellows and reds and russet browns, while near at hand, under the great trees, the undergrowth of

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bracken fern and bramble was one mass of beautiful shades of gold, amber and crimson.

Before the stately entrance of Gidden Hall several guests and intimate friends were waiting for Lord Gerald, the Master of the Hounds, and vainly trying to rein in their impatient horses, which were prancing hither and thither in their anxiety to be off. A very pretty picture they all made and one that would have been very pleasant to look at had they been gathered together for a less cruel purpose than that of running down to death a beautiful and inoffensive creature. Deer stalking is bad enough, but in that case the poor stag is killed outright, not tortured for hours. It really seems unbelievable that not only men, but gentle, educated ladies can think it a noble sport for scores of strong men, women, horses and dogs to pursue relentlessly a poor frightened creature whose only wish is to escape unnoticed into its beloved woods. It rose that morning so strong, so alert, full of enjoyment of its peaceful, happy life in those deep solitudes, asking for nothing but to be allowed to roam in liberty, browsing the tender grass and drinking at the clear mountain stream. How proudly it tossed its beautiful antlered head, sniffing in the cool fresh breeze and rejoicing in the simple delights of God's beautiful world. Then all of a sudden dread sounds reached its ears, the baying of hounds, the tramping of horses' feet, the shrill sound of the horns, and wild with terror it fled madly before them, it knew

not where, with beating heart and dilated nostrils. Again and again it thought to escape, to hide in safety under the deep shades of its forest home, but ah! vain hope, the dogs have scented it again, a hundred or more cruel foes are after this one poor, trembling stag, this creature that a loving God had made to enjoy the peace and beauty of His beautiful world. For hours and hours its agony of dread and of frantic, despairing effort have lasted and at last it falls exhausted, torn down by the dogs and in spite of its piteous moans and the tears that fall from its lovely, pleading eyes it is butchered in cold blood, and tenderly nurtured girls and loving mothers glory in being "in at the death" and watching its last struggle. Could anything be more heartless, more cowardly, more wantonly cruel! It seems like a relic of barbarism and yet in this enlightened twentieth century it is still looked upon as a grand and noble sport.

At a little distance from Gidden Hall on a high grassy knoll the bulk of the hunting party was assembling while the huntsman, sounding his great silver horn, marshaled together his fine pack of eager staghounds. All that was most notable in the way of nobility, wealth and beauty, seemed to have gathered together on that glorious autumn morning and the charming girls, so fearlessly riding their spirited mounts, caused much admiration among the onlookers.

"Where is the Master of the Hounds? Why

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don't we start?" asked one of the young men, many of whom were getting as impatient as the horses.

"Here he comes with the Earl of Sheendon. By Jove! what a grand looking old chap that is. It seems a shame he's so crusty with Artingdale. Good sort of a chap, Artingdale, though he's no sportsman," said another young nobleman.

Just then Lord Gerald and his guest, the Earl, came out of the great hall, still talking vehemently. They had been great friends since childhood and Lord Gerald had taken advantage of their intimacy to speak pretty plainly that morning, vainly trying to dissuade his old chum from doing what he considered an injustice.

"I tell you I have a right to do what I like and I'm going to do it not later than Friday," cried the Earl as he sprang into the saddle and let Mephisto show off how spirited he was and how perfect a rider was his master.

"Well, I only hope you'll think better of it before then," murmured Lord Gerald, as he also mounted and, being the Master of the Hounds, rode up to the knoll and gave the much wished for signal for the start.

In all the annals of this, the finest deer stalking country of England, there had never been such a hunt as there was that day. Two young bucks were started and lost after much hard riding and then, quite late in the afternoon, the dogs were in

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full cry again, pursuing one of the most splendid stags that had ever been given chase to. He must have been the king of the neighboring woods and seemed as tireless and crafty as he was magnificent. On and on they rode, past Porlock and out among the hills for mile after mile, galloping up and down breakneck mountain paths, fording streams, leaping hedges, till horses and riders were fairly worn out, and still the hounds gave cry and still the fine stag eluded them.

In spite of himself, Earl Sheendon had been much upset by his friend's earnest pleading and he felt too wretched to enjoy the perfectly glorious country, the perilous riding or the excitement of the chase and had half unconsciously wandered far from the hunting party, feeling inclined to saunter leisurely back to Gidden Hall. He knew every inch of the surrounding country, in which he had spent a great part of his boyhood, so there was no fear of his losing his way. All of a sudden, from a distance he heard the horns giving the signal that the stag was in sight once more and hard pressed. A sudden desire to be in at the death seized the Earl and putting spurs to his horse, he galloped off again to join the others. He could see them well and noted that they were making for a point he could reach as soon as they did, if not sooner, by dashing through some fields. At the end of the last field was a high prickly hedge with a ditch on the other side of it. He knew this hedge well and

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would not have dreamed of taking it with a less perfect jumper than Mephisto. But with him why shouldn't he? He forgot that the poor horse had been out all day, that he was exhausted with fatigue and his nerves all overstrung, and his surprise was intense when at first Mephisto refused to take the leap.

"Why, Mephisto! what does this mean? Over with you!" he cried, giving him a cut with his whip and spurring him on to the necessary effort. Poor Mephisto! whatever his faults were, want of courage or willingness was not one of them, and thus urged by his master, he summoned up all his remaining energy and with a supreme effort gave a wild leap into the air. But alas! his strength failed him; he caught his hind feet in the hedge, made a desperate effort to free himself, then, though he cleared the ditch, fell heavily, head forward, crushing his rider under him. With a last futile struggle he rolled over and fell dead, while his master lay flat on his back with his stern white face turned to the sky while the gray shadow of death stole slowly over it. And at a short distance the hunt rode noisily by, the dogs giving voice, the horns winding, the huntsmen shouting in their excitement and the poor exhausted stag still fleeing for dear life.

Those who do not realize the ever merciful Providence of God said that it seemed a strange irony of fate that the only two people to see the

accident to the haughty, bigoted Earl were a peasant woman minding her sheep in a neighbouring field and an invalid priest quietly reading at the door of the cottage where he had come to recuperate. In a few minutes they were both bending over the dying man, who at the sound of their voices opened his eyes, then murmured faintly :

“ You are a Catholic priest ? ”

“ Yes, my child. Can I do anything for you ? ” answered the Father gently.

“ I’ve never been—baptized. Can you baptize me —before—I die ? I believe in the Blessed Trinity. Quick—for God’s sake ! I believe—I repent —”

At a sign from the priest the woman seized the Earl’s cap, lying beside him, and filled it with water from the ditch.

“ What name ? ” asked the priest.

“ William Sinclair—Car —” the voice died away.

“ William, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” said the priest solemnly as he poured the water on the dying man’s head.

“ Thank God ! may He forgive my sins,” murmured the dying Earl. Then suddenly rousing himself with a final effort :

“ Give my love to Artingdale. Tell him—I was wrong. He must—forgive. Tell him—I leave him everything. And tell—the child, Emil—he did—help me—to die.—My love to my wife—and Emil,

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the thought—of his love—is sweet to me.—God help me—I believe —” A faint shudder passed over the ashen face, the gray eyes closed and the proud Earl of Sheendon lay dead,—but dead with the water of Baptism still on his brow and with the priest’s crucifix pressed to his lips.

By a strange instinct of preservation, the great stag had suddenly changed its course and came leaping and bounding through this very meadow with the dogs and Master of the Hounds close at its heels and the whole hunt following at full gallop.

As in the life of St. Hubert, the priest rushed forward between the fleeing stag and its pursuers, holding up the crucifix he still held in his hand and crying :

“ For God’s sake stop, stop, my lord ! There has been death enough for one day.”

Lord Gerald caught sight of the horse and rider lying beside the ditch and instantly giving the signal to halt, sprang from his horse and rushed up to the dead man’s side, exclaiming :

“ Good God ! it is my friend, the Earl of Sheendon. You don’t mean to say—you don’t think—he is dead ! ” he added in a horrified tone as he knelt beside him and with trembling hands lifted the limp body and looked into the white, still face.

“ Yes, my lord,” answered the priest sadly ; “ he breathed his last just a minute or so before I saw you coming.”

“ Great heavens ! It seems like a judgment of

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God, doesn't it ?" murmured another of the Earl's friends who had dismounted and stood beside him, while Lord Gerald called to his friend in a heart-broken voice :

" William ! speak to me. Look at me.—Don't you hear me, Will ? Oh, it cannot, cannot be !" he added in a broken voice. " He was so strong, so full of life and energy a short hour ago.—William ! my lifelong friend, my old chum !" and Lord Gerald buried his face in his hands with a sob, while the whole hunting party, which had dismounted, stood awestruck and sorrowful around their dead companion. Women wept and even strong men felt too shocked and unnerved to think of anything but the silent figure lying before them, while the huntsman with difficulty called back the dogs and this time, thank God, the beautiful stag escaped unhurt into the depths of the great woods.

CHAPTER XXII

AT SHEENDON CASTLE

IT was with a tumult of conflicting emotions that Lord Artingdale suddenly found himself Earl of Sheendon and owner of all his father's estate and the greater part of his fortune. To begin with, he had been terribly shocked and distressed by his father's sudden death for, in spite of their late differences, he had always been deeply attached to him and could not forget that during all his boyhood and youth the old Earl had been a most indulgent if not affectionate parent to him. It seemed doubly sad to think that the stern old man had passed away with his heart full of anger and hatred against the Church, therefore when the new Earl heard the further news that his father had died baptized, through the childish and loving efforts of Emil, and that he had left messages of love and forgiveness for himself, his thankfulness was boundless and the worst bitterness of his grief was softened. Still, it was with a very sad heart that he said good-bye to that most lovable city of Rome where he had received the inestimable gift of faith, to the pleasant busy life he had led there in his diplomatic capacity and to the

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many kind friends they had made. His wife was still more sorry to find herself Countess of Sheendon and to have to leave her happy Roman home, but the children's regrets were almost swallowed up in joyful anticipations of a fairly long journey and any number of new experiences and new scenes.

At first Gilbert couldn't get used to hearing his father called, my lord the Earl, and his mother, the Countess Sheendon.

"It's all so muddling," he exclaimed almost impatiently when they were in the train speeding in all haste to England for the funeral. "How can you be Countess Sheendon, mother, when bonne maman is that already?"

"Bonne maman is dowager Countess now, dear, but don't trouble; being called Countess won't change mother in any way," she added with a smile.

"Then there's no Lady Artingdale now, or Lord Artingdale," continued the boy.

"Yes, there is," answered his father. "Philip is now Viscount Artingdale."

"Gee! Good old Phil, Lord Artingdale. Golly, but that's too funny for anything. Fancy our Phil a Lord! I shouldn't wonder at finding myself a Lord next."

"No, you are but the Honorable Gilbert Carley and Emil the Honorable Emil Carley."

"Honorable! Gee whiz! Honorable!" cried

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Gilbert, fairly rolling about with laughter. "And is my Fairy Honorabless Theo?"

"No," laughed his mother, "Theo is Lady Theodora now."

"Well, I don't call that fair! Not that I want to be a Lord. Still, she's more of a kid than I am. I say, Fairy, you'll have to give up dolls now you're Lady Theodora, for ladies never play with dolls."

"Then I just *won't* be a Lady till I grow up," answered Theo decisively, but after a minute's anxious thought her face brightened and she said: "Oh! but it's all right, Bertie; mother was reading to me the other day that some little princesses were ever so fond of their dollies, so if princesses can play with them, just a Lady can too. But *you'll* have to be ever so good and proper now you're *honorable*, Bertie, else how can they honor you?"

"Bravo, Theo! give it back," cried her mother with an amused smile. "Don't trouble, children, these mere handles to your names needn't make a bit of difference to you; only the more God gives us in the way of money and position, the more we are bound to serve Him faithfully and to do all we can for others."

Earl Sheendon sighed wearily, for the feeling of all the responsibilities ahead of him oppressed him terribly just then, and little Theo, seeing the look of anxious sadness on his face, climbed on to his

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knees and nestling her curly head against his breast said lovingly :

“Poor papa! I’m so sorry you feel sad. But never mind, I’ll pray ever so hard for you.”

The funeral was a grand and imposing one and after it, the new Earl and Countess were fairly swamped with visits of condolence and veiled congratulations, and nearly worked to death with all they had to do to settle in their new home and take up the duties of their position.

Earl Sheendon knew how great were the rejoicings over his accession all over his estates and felt that his tenantry would wish to give them a joyful ovation on their arrival to take possession of Sheendon Castle. He therefore determined on spending their first year of mourning partly in their London mansion and partly with his mother, who had quite surprised every one by being perfectly broken-hearted over the death of her husband and who, therefore, needed pleasant and cheerful companionship. Still, the Earl visited every part of his estate several times in a strictly private way and set about at once the work he meant to do for bettering the condition of all on his estates and specially that of the working classes. He stayed at the castle for many days, previously sending word beforehand that though he wished for no public recognition of his presence for the present, he would like all those who had any complaints to make or troubles to confide, to come and state them

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to him *personally*. From early morning to late at night his study was besieged by the good country folk, to all of whom he listened patiently, promising that each case should be promptly inquired into.

A few weeks later he again returned incognito, visited almost every cottage and home on his property and made numerous notes of all he saw there. Immediately on his return to London he sent for several of the best architects, for many of the most noted philanthropists, politicians, and workers, and after long consultations with them and with his lawyers, he gave orders for a pretty and practical model village to be constructed on one of the most charming spots of the Sheendon estate. Several streets of neat cottages of different sizes were built, all fitted with every modern convenience and each one surrounded with a piece of land consisting of a flower garden in front and a kitchen garden at the back. The cottages were pretty, airy, convenient and were to be let at a lower rental than the miserable shacks which many of the old cottages had been. At one end of this model village was a public laundry with twenty numbered wash tubs and every possible convenience for washing, drying, and ironing. For a few pence each woman could use this laundry for several hours, finding to her hand a plentiful supply of hot and cold water, soap and cleansing fluids, electric irons and every implement to facilitate her work. Not only that, but at one end of the laundry

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there was a small room in which were a number of baking ovens, each bearing the number of one of the wash tubs, so that the woman who was using it could at the same time watch the cooking of her husband's dinner. The furnace which heated the water also heated the ovens, so that there was no extra expense. A matron had charge of the laundry, which was expected to prove tolerably self-supporting. Opposite to it was a Catholic school and day nursery where the mothers could leave their babies for a nominal sum per day while they were washing or out to work. Though the fees were very small, all these conveniences had to be paid for, as the Earl's intention was not to treat the people as paupers but to help them to be happy, self-respecting men and women. At about half a mile from the other end of the village was a small but well equipped hospital with a separate building in which every case of contagious disease, however slight, was expected to be taken at once. This it was hoped would prevent all spread of these maladies among the inhabitants of the model cottages.

Right in the center of the village was a pretty green with large trees, a drinking fountain and band stand and around it were four fair sized buildings, a well equipped club room for the men, another for women, a small public library and a fine covered playground fitted with swings and other gymnastic appliances.

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The beautiful chapel of the castle which had been desecrated and used as a lumber room for years was reopened, restored and enlarged and a fine presbytery built near the castle and generously endowed for all time by the Earl. There was no attempt at inducing people to change their religion, but Catholic families were heartily welcomed and made to feel at home on the estate, and the private school, though it had Catholic teachers, took children of every religious belief and treated them all with the same kindness and generosity.

A few bigots had grumbled at the changes made, but on the whole, the population was very enthusiastic over all the improvements, all the more so that the young Earl, as they called him, had been most kindly and open handed to every one, making repairs and putting in every modern convenience at the farms on the estate, giving generously to the poor and making all feel his personal sympathy with them in every way. Hundreds of workmen had been employed getting this work done and when the year was up all the new buildings were ready for occupancy, and it was arranged that on the same day the family came to take possession and be welcomed by the tenantry, the Earl and Countess should solemnly open the new village with its schools, nursery, workrooms, clubs and hospital.

Phil and Emil had obtained a few days' holiday so as to be able to join in the festivities, and it was

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a very happy party that arrived at the little station, which was several miles from Sheendon Castle. To their surprise they found that even there a large deputation of the principal tenants and officials of the neighborhood were awaiting them. The station was a perfect bower of chrysanthemums and autumn leaves and a brass band greeted them with a lively march and preceded them as they drove along in their state carriage with coachman and footman in livery, and lackeys standing up behind. In this first carriage rode the Earl and Countess with little Theo, also the dowager Countess and Philip, while in a second one were Mr. and Mrs. Van Orton, Emil and Gilbert with Mlle. Lamotte. Uncle Christopher had excused himself on the plea of sickness, but Lord Gerald and many other friends had accompanied them as guests, so that the stream of beautiful carriages and horses was quite an imposing one.

As they neared the castle, they were met by an enthusiastically cheering crowd, and passed through numerous triumphal arches on which were mottoes of "Welcome," "Long live our Earl and Countess," "Health and happiness be ever yours," and so forth. Many bands played, the crowds shouted and waved and again and again rang out that good old English cheer which increased in volume till it was almost like the roar of thunder. As the Earl and Countess bowed and smiled and the latter held up little Theo and bade her kiss her hand to the crowd, the

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enthusiasm grew greater and greater till the frightened horses were taken out of the Earl's carriage and the people themselves dragged it up to the castle, where another crowd awaited them upon the steps. All the children of the village, dressed in white with garlands of flowers on their heads, came up to greet the Countess as she alighted, and one of the prettiest and tiniest offered her a bouquet almost as large as herself. With a radiant smile, Countess Sheendon bent down and kissed the child as she took the flowers from her and the place rang again with the cheers of "Long live the Earl and Countess," "Welcome to Sheendon," "Long live Lord Artingdale."

Taking his wife by the hand, the Earl led her up the great flight of steps followed by the dowager Countess leaning on Philip's arm, Mr. and Mrs. Van Orton, Emil and Mlle. Lamotte and last, but by no means least applauded, Gilbert proudly leading his sister, little Lady Theodora. On arriving at the top of the stairs they turned and faced the throng, Earl Sheendon standing with his wife on his right, his mother on his left and the others grouped around them. Then in a voice trembling with emotion he thanked the assembly for their hearty welcome in his own name and in that of his whole family. He spoke of his earnest desire, shared by his wife and children, of being true and helpful friends to them all. He told of the pleasure they had taken in planning and building for them the

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model village, which he hoped the tenants would help him to make one of the most perfect of the kind in all England.

"I want it to be," he added, "a village full of happy, healthy, busy homes, homes where peace and plenty reign, homes where you will enjoy your lives as much as we do ours. There is absolutely no reason why you should not do so, for it is not the size or grandeur of one's house that brings happiness or content, nor is it, as some people seem to imagine, a privilege to be wealthy enough not to be obliged to work. Work is one of the greatest factors of happiness in life, and if we do our duty towards God and our fellow men, we shall all of us ever find plenty of work to do. I have been a hard worker all my life and intend to continue to be one. I want to improve the condition of the working classes, specially of those on my estate [violent applause]. I want to know every one of you personally and help you all to lead happy and noble, as well as useful and comfortable lives. You will, I hope, find in our model village every facility and opportunity for doing so, and as time goes on I hope to add to it and make more and more improvements all over my estates [vehement cheers]. To you all who have so welcomed us we return our heartfelt thanks and wish to say that we not only welcome you to-day to the banquet and rejoicings in Sheendon Castle and grounds, but that at all times we wish you to look upon us as

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your friends and to come to us without the slightest hesitation whenever we can be of use to you by our help, advice or sympathy."

Deafening applause greeted the Earl's short speech, then after asking the crowd to wait for them one short half hour, he again took his wife's hand and led the way into Sheendon Castle, the family and guests all following. Not only the entrance to the castle but every room and hall in it was most beautifully decorated with flowers and foliage, and as the family and guests went from room to room they could not but rejoice at the perfect beauty of their stately new home. Then after resting for a few minutes, during which they interviewed all the servants and partook of slight refreshments, they went out once more and were again greeted with storms of applause. Carriages were waiting for them but they preferred walking down to the village, mingling among the crowd and talking pleasantly with all with whom they came in contact.

They were perfectly delighted with the charmingly pretty village with its pretty cottages, beautiful trees, bright gardens already full of flowers and large and convenient buildings. All of these were visited and declared open for the public, and they were received with great admiration and much gratitude by the prospective tenants. Countess Sheendon was specially delighted with the day nursery and laundry and laughingly declared it

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quite made her wish to come and do a day's washing and that the women must expect to see her among them occasionally. After having inspected and admired everything they all returned to Sheendon Castle for the banquet, or rather banquets, for there was one for the family and guests in the great dining-hall of the castle, and one for the tenantry and servants in the servants' hall, while out under the great trees of the park long tables, at which a hundred could be seated, had been placed all along one of the principal avenues and two whole oxen had been roasted in the open, to say nothing of dozens of turkeys and all manner of other good things which were brought by the truck-load from the castle kitchens. Bands played, people chatted and sang and made speeches and drank toasts and upon all the gay scene the bright autumn sun was good enough to shine resplendently, a piece of wonderful good fortune in such an uncertain climate as that of England.

The next day they had a more private and touching ceremony when the Bishop, attended by a number of priests from his diocese, came to reconsecrate the chapel, bless the castle, the schools and, indeed, the whole village, though it was done so as not to arouse any ill-feeling among the non-Catholics.

Three years later Countess Sheendon was sitting on the great terrace of the castle looking out over

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the exquisite view of park and surrounding country. Her face was radiant with happiness, for this was holiday time and she had all her children round her. Philip, handsomer than ever, was quite a young man now and about to attend Oxford University to finish his education. Emil was still very boyish, but the indolent expression of his face had given place to one of eager earnestness. As for Gilbert, he still looked and was their little American pickle, warm-hearted, generous, brave to a fault, and full of a hundred plans and ambitions. Theo was everybody's darling, a sweet, winsome, merry girl, very simple though beautiful, deeply pious, and with a warm heart full of love and pity for every living creature. The poor and sorrowful about the neighborhood simply worshipped her, for she followed in the footsteps of her mother who had won the love and confidence of all by her constant and ready sympathy.

"Well, Phil," exclaimed Gilbert all of a sudden, "so you'll have to be a 'bloated Earl' after all, some day or other."

"Indeed *no*," laughed Phil merrily. "To begin with, father may live to be a hundred and I sincerely hope he will. Secondly, even when I do have to be an Earl, I'll never be a *bloated* one, but a good, earnest, strenuous man, like father, a worker among the people and a keen politician. I'm just longing to start in the political life; there are so many reforms I want to work for."

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"As for me," said Gilbert, sticking his hands in his pockets, "I'm going to drop my 'honorable' and be a good old American citizen and farmer. I promised granddad I would and I'll just love it."

"What! and go right away from me?" cried Theo, her eyes filling with tears.

"Oh, well, you may be Châtelaine of Hautebrêche and La Roche Altée by that time, my Lady Theodore, but never mind, you must come and spend half the year with me, and I'll spend part of the year with you."

"I'll be tempted to spend *all* the year with you, if you live at Hautebrêche, Theo," cried Philip, impulsively.

"Will you? I didn't know you were so fond of the place," answered his sister.

"Why, Fairy! you blind bat!" cried Gilbert. "Don't you know the attraction at Hautebrêche? There's old Phil blushing over it like a girl."

"Yes, we all know what the attraction is, don't we, Phil?" said the Countess, laying her hand lovingly on the boy's shoulder. "But what will bonne maman say? She foresaw it and tried to prevent it before you were fourteen."

"It was all too late then," laughed Phil. "I hardly remember the time when I was not in love with Yvonne de Neslac. But why should bonne maman wish to prevent it? You don't, do you, mother? Father says he will make no objection when we are really of age to marry, and Yvonne

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has promised she will wait any length of time for me!"

"Indeed!" laughed the Countess. "So you young people have settled it thus far! I would never dream of making the slightest objection, dear; indeed, I know of no girl I would sooner have for a daughter-in-law, for she is as good and pious as she is clever and beautiful, and your father and I would far rather know you happily married than to have you make what is termed a grand match. But I think Bertie is killing off poor bonne maman in a most unceremonious manner by making Theo Châtelaine of Hautebrèche! I am glad to say your grandmother looks as if she might live for the next forty years."

"And in any case I wouldn't wish to live far from you, mother darling, or from father, either," cried Theo, throwing her arms around her mother's neck. "Bonne maman ought to leave her estates to Emil."

"No, siree! Emil has a higher ambition than that, sister," answered the boy with a bright smile. "Earldoms and castles are not enough for me. I aim at something nobler than all that: I want to be one of God's anointed, a poor Catholic priest, perhaps a missionary."

"I know, and I shall be proud to have a son, a priest," said the Countess, smiling though her eyes were swimming with tears. "Before many years are past, all my sons will be leaving me to fulfill

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their mission in the world, and though it breaks my heart to think of parting with you, my dear boys, still, I would be the last to wish to keep you back. All I pray for is that you may lead noble, fervent Catholic lives, and do some good in the world. I hope that wherever you are and however far from mother, you will every one of you glory in being, as far as lies in your power, Ambassadors of God, leading others to better knowledge and love of Him, as some of you had the privilege of doing, even as little children.”

THE END

